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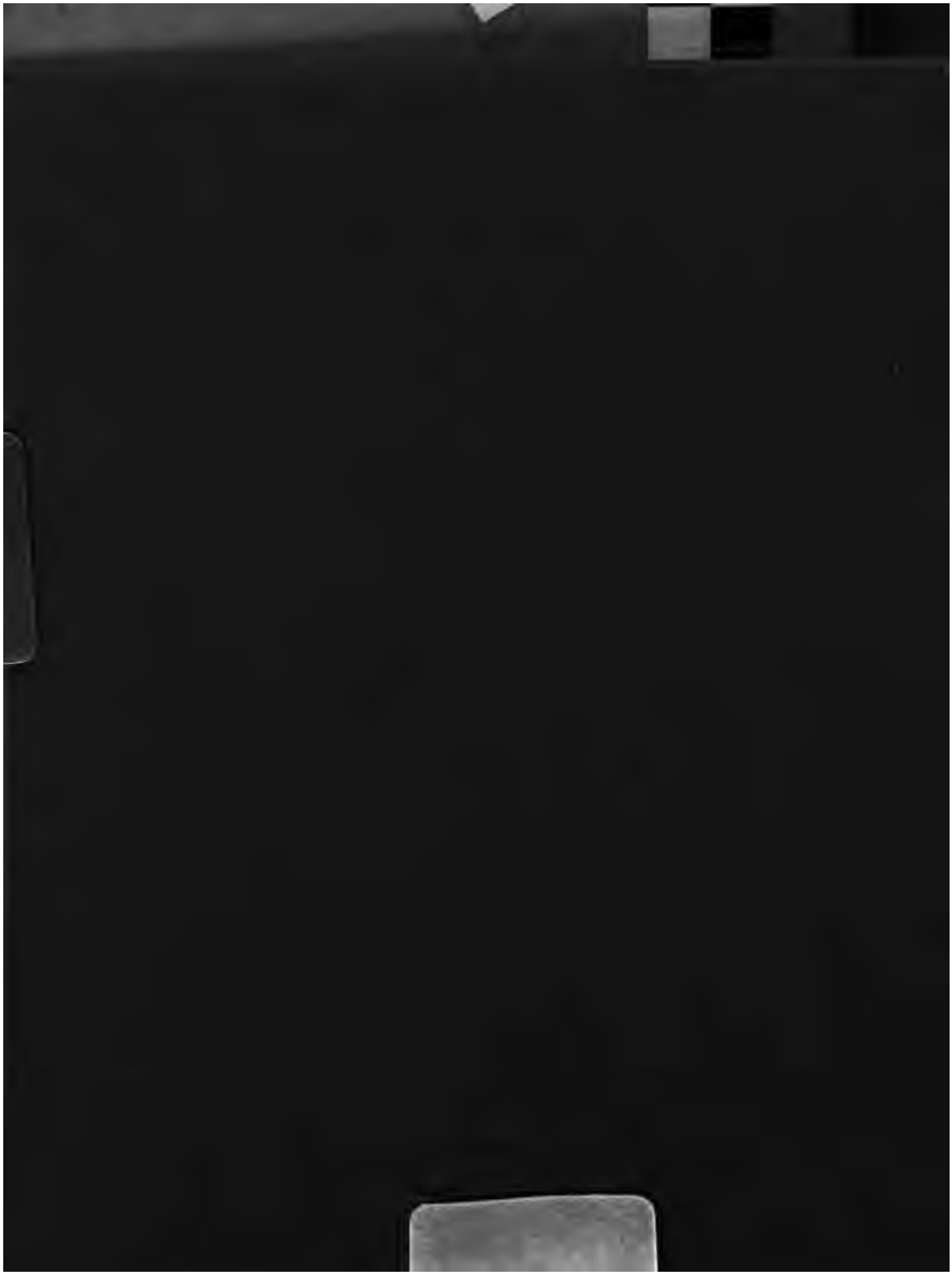


CHEEP AND CHATTER.

By ALICE BANKS.

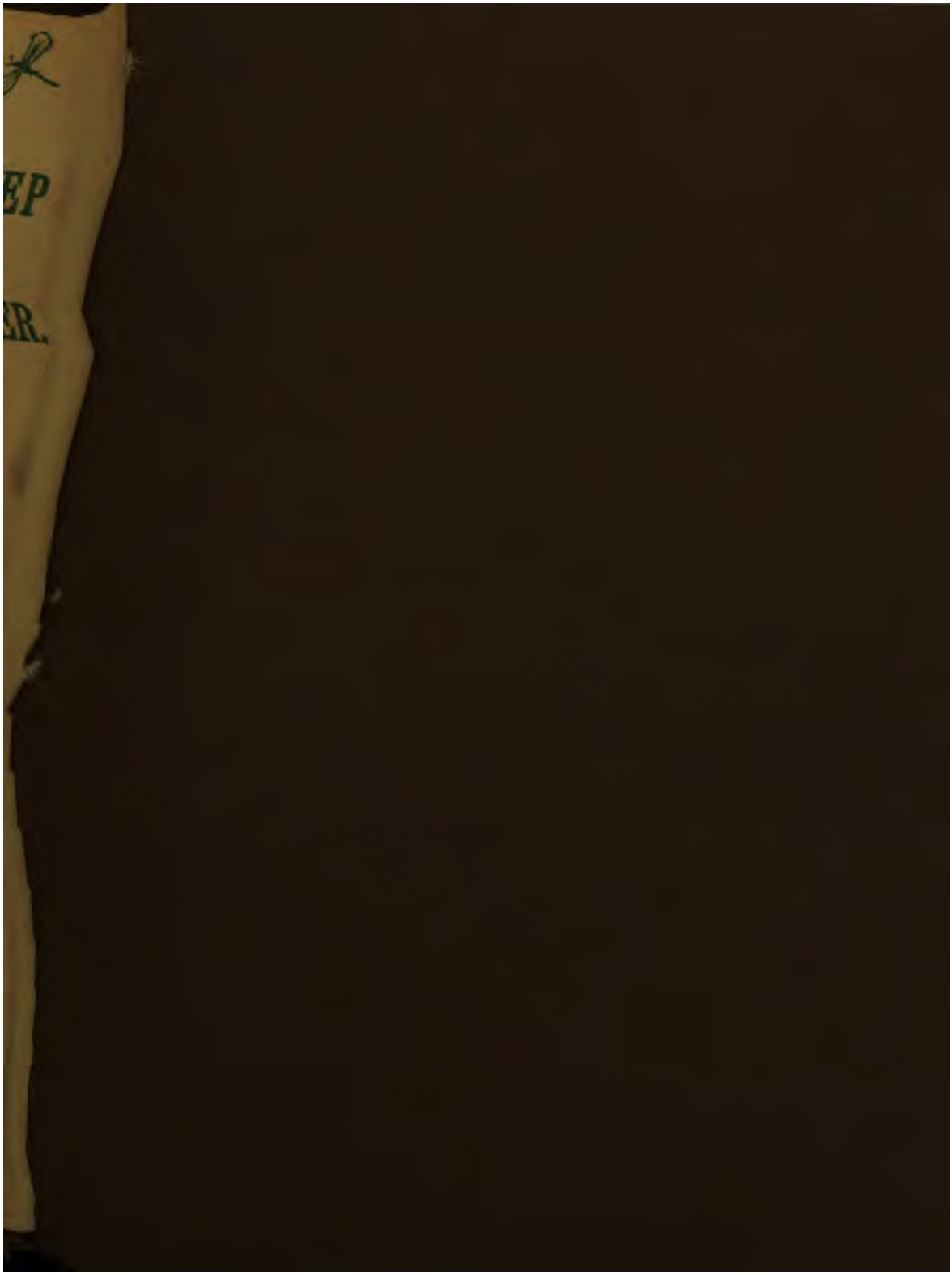
With 56 Character Illustrations by GORDON BROWNE.

LONDON:
BLACKIE & SON, 49 & 50 OLD BAILEY, E.C.

CHEEP AND CHATTER.

Illustrated.

BLACKIE & SON.



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Frontispiece. OUR LEADING CHARACTERS.

CHEEP AND CHATTER
OR
LESSONS FROM FIELD & TREE.

BY ALICE BANKS.

WITH FIFTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY GORDON BROWNE.

LONDON:
BLACKIE & SON, OLD BAILEY.
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PREFACE

DEAR CHILDREN,

These little tales are written to warn you in a pleasant and amusing way of the many follies that may spoil your lives, or, at least, render them less happy and useful. When you are old you will sadly see how many joys you have thrown away for merest whims, tempers, or stubbornness that might have been cured had you been teachable, and the danger of indulging them had been set before you in some impressive manner. If, like "Mrs. Peepy," you *will* sacrifice comfort to "gentility" —if, like "Mrs. Mus," you are spiteful and envious, or weak and silly like "Miss Sylva"—if, like "Belle" and "Beauty," you are affected and vain, or passionate like

"Dick," or teasing like "Cocky"—you will see in these stories, as in little convex mirrors, what loss or suffering you may bring on yourselves and on others.

But that you will be led to avoid such faults and follies, and seek rather for the pure-heartedness of "Dove," the kindliness of "Bee," the tenderness of "Pip," the cheerful good-nature of "Mr. Robin," the candour of "Mr. Mus," and the good common-sense of "Mr. Horse," is the sincere wish, dear children, of your loving friend,

A. B.

Nov. 1883.

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THE NAUGHTY HARVEST MOUSE

THE corn was just filling the ears, and making them look plump, when a tiny mouse was looking among it for a place to build its nest.

By-and-by it met a friend.

"My dear Peepy, I am glad to see you," said she; "I cannot find a nice snug place to build my nest. Where have you made yours?"

"I have not made mine at all yet," said Peepy; "indeed, I was just going to decide on another field. The mouse society here is so mixed, I do not wish to bring up my children amongst them."

"Well, I don't know," said Creepy; "I met Brownie just now, she's going to settle in this field, and I always thought her *so* well-bred."

"Always builds her nest on the ground."

"Well, that is the fashion of her family, you know; indeed, I think it's much safer."

"So low!" said Mrs. Peepy, sitting up with her two little forelegs dangling languidly, and looking down on Mrs. Creepy. "I am seeking for a nice tall thistle, or two strong straws of wheat. I take great pains with *my* nest, and I don't like it to be hidden. It is very neat and pretty."

"Yes, so it is," said Creepy; "it is something to be proud of. Quite as handsome as anything those large creatures make who sow the corn."

"Poor clumsy things," said Mrs. Peepy, scornfully. "*Their* absurd teeth are almost useless. As far as I can see only a plague to them from their very birth. I hear the mother of the little ones that run in this field for ever saying, 'It's about its teeth, *that* makes it so cross.' Why, my nine babes don't give half the worry that one great round little man (I suppose he is) gives her just with his teeth, and after all they don't seem of any use to him when he's got them."

"Well," said Creepy, who was more humble, "they may be; we do not know all their habits. I think, perhaps, there may be some things we do not quite understand."

"Not much to find out about *them*. They are a dismal race of beings. All the talk of those who spoil all this nice wheat by cutting it down the moment it is fit for us to eat, is of their woes and pains."

"Well," said Creepy, "I agree with you there. Many's the time I've said in my heart,

'Thank goodness I was born a mouse and not a man.' At least I have time to enjoy every minute of my life."

"I have my anxieties," said Peepy, "but I am not so easily satisfied as you."

There was something rather nasty in Peepy's tone as she said this, as much as to say, "I am higher minded, more genteel."

But Creepy, who was the sweetest-tempered, merriest mouse in the field, never suffered such foolish speeches to wound her, for she was very wise, and saw that no one is really so silly as the folks who are always saying, "What *I* think, what *I* do, *my* idea." She learned a good deal from the talk of folk who came about the fields in harvest time. The wise gentle wife from the farm would come and knit with her little ones round her, and chat to her good man as he went about, and Creepy saw she was firm and calm, yet she never talked fast and much, nor said, "*I* do this, *I* do that;" but the silly little women who were for ever in a hurry and bustle, never quiet, would talk as if no one else was so wise. "Well," thought Creepy, "they make some people believe them, I see, but in the end this nice calm wife gets more

joy. Her good man is glad to hear her, and I see heeds her words though they are so few."

So all Peepy's high conduct never vexed or ruffled Creepy. She went her merry little way, and her dear little bright eyes shone with fun. By and by her husband came up to her, "Well, dear," said he, "have you settled on a spot for our nest?"

"No, my love, I have been talking to Peepy. She seems quite disgusted with the society of this field."

"Oh, pray don't let her fill you with her silly notions, Creepy; she'll soon take the fun out of you. And *you'll* be turning your back upon every friend we have."

"My dear," said Creepy, "do you suppose I am likely to wish to give up all our pleasant witty friends because a silly mouse calls them low? Oh no! I see what comes of that among the corn spoilers. Oh! you've no idea what I learn from those unhappy creatures, and I am so glad to see the nice wife at our farm has no such silly thoughts. Here she comes; let us peep at her."

So Creepy and her lord stood still, while a lady tall and fair and calm came by, holding

by the hand a little girl. The little girl began to skip about, while the lady talked with, or listened to, a prim little person who was with her.

"I so seldom go out," this little woman was saying. "There is no society one can mix with in our town. Yes, I do feel very lonely."

Creepy and her husband laughed.

"I can *not* think," said she, "what any man or mouse means by being lonely; why, there always is some one by us to keep us from that, if it is but one. Then that one has friends, and if we help or love that one, such heaps more mice one gets to know through him; and why should it not be the same with men?"

"You know, dear, that is how we came to know Brownie and his jolly family, through your kindness to his old crosspatch uncle when he hurt his hind-leg."

"Dear me, if one person is not nice, he is sure to know some one who is. What a number of charming friends we have that we met through being affable with mice that many would not notice!"

"I am exceedingly glad to hear you say so, my dear," said her husband. "I was afraid

when I saw you so busy talking to that fine lady I should have you imitating her," and he tilted his head, dangled his fore-paws affectedly, and made himself look so much like poor Mrs. Peepy that Creepy gave him a light box on the ear. "For shame, sir!" said she laughing.

It was but a touch, but it sent her husband flat on his back with his little legs in the air.

It is very painful to any person who has a refined and sensitive mind and a kind and feeling heart to find that they have knocked a friend down when they only meant to give him a playful tap; but when it is any one we highly

respect whom we have thus bowled over it is most distressing. No wife likes to see her husband flat on his back with his legs in the air; but to a dutiful little wife like Creepy it was doubly affecting to see him in such a position, and she hastened to help him up.

"My dear," said he, astonished, "why did you do that?"

Poor Creepy was ready to cry in her surprise and confusion, and her little red coat turned redder with shame.

"My love," she said, "you cannot suppose I meant to do it? But you really are so very fat and round that a touch rolls you over. Pray forgive me."

"I am certainly very stout," said he; "it must be that. Pray don't distress yourself, my love. I feel quite sure the accident was owing to my being so fat."

"Still it was rude and awkward of me, darling, and I will be more careful in future."

So this amiable little pair comforted each other, and such little misfortunes did but make them love and admire each other more tenderly.

Creepy was so very careful never to let her husband be made fun of or to laugh at him in the least. She would much rather have been hurt than allow her husband's feelings to be wounded.

This kind thought for him touched his generous little heart.

Well, Mrs. Peepy went into the next field, and there, in the very midst of a thistle plant, she built her nest. It was most perfect.

She split the straws and reeds of which she made it so that it might be very close and neat, and took such immense pains with it that it might be better than any other mouse's, that it was as round as a ball, and so close and firm that she had to push her little nose and feet between the plaits to get at her little ones, for when she had put them there she could not get inside herself. Seven sweet little mice, no bigger than a filbert, did she put into this little ball of a nest.

"There," said she, tossing her proud little head, "no vulgar mice can get at them there."

But the little girl who used to play in the field often, came running by one day and spied the nest.

She jumped for joy when she found she could get at it, and ran in with it to her brother.

They rolled it about all over the floor, and poor Peepy's genteel little children went over and over, head over heels. They were knocked about in the world after all terribly.

Peepy was much too weak and helpless to prevent the little girl getting her nest. It was evening before the farmer and his wife came home, and when the little girl showed them her wonderful ball the farmer said:

"Why, pet, it is the nest of a harvest mouse, and I fear all the tiny mice are dead by this time, they have been so long without food."

Yes, the little mice were dead! lost through their mother's pride, who would not be content to build a lowly nest a few inches from the ground among the thick wheat, as Creepy did, who took care, too, not to build her house too small, and to give up the shape of it for comfort. Creepy's babies had room enough, and plenty of little friends, and besides she built her home among others, so that if any one came hunting for little mice they might have some chance of escape.

"For, my pets," she said to her children,

"what with being the very smallest animal that has four feet and such very nice figures, and our nest so exquisite, many people are very anxious to see us, and they who love little things hunt for us, so we must be very careful, for it is very very disappointing just as one has worked so hard to make one's nest, and fitted it with such lovely little darlings, to see those corn spoilers' children playing at ball with one's home."

"So it is, mama," said her eldest daughter. "How would they like us to toss their house up in the air, with them in it?"

"Just because we're littler than them, too," said another.

"I'd fink they'd be sorry to hurt such very ickle fings as us, mudder," said Toto.

Creepy sighed sadly. "Ah! darlings, being little and weak does not always protect us. The world is full of tyrants. But there are fine noble natures who *must* protect and care for anything weaker than themselves. I hope each of you, my own dear mice, will grow up one of those. But you had far better in the end be the victim than the tyrant, if you keep good and innocent. Darling little mice, attend

to these words, and see what joy they will bring you. Are you all listening to mama?"

The eight little mice looked up at their dear mother. Every word she said they kept as a treasure.

"Love and care for everything that is weaker in any way than yourselves.

"Often the creature we help when it is weak grows stronger than we, and richly rewards us. But no reward is like the lovely feeling that you are using your power, whether of age, or health, or sense, or wealth, for some one who really needs your help."

"But can ickle mouses ike us do any good?" said Toto.

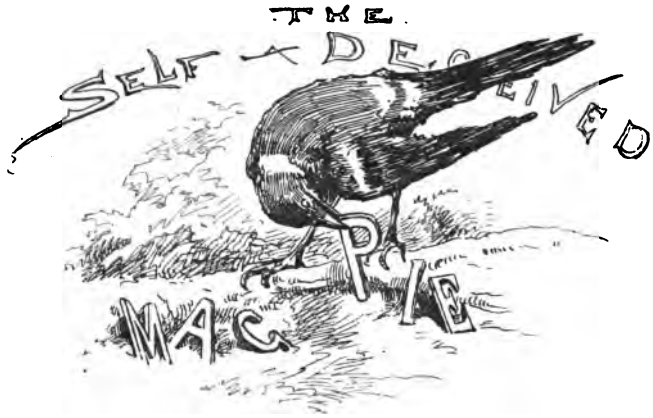
"*Any one,*" said Creepy so solemnly that all those dear bright little eyes were fixed once more on her face; "Any one who is full of love is full of power. To LOVE, *nothing* is impossible.

"It is the most mighty power in the universe. A little mouse, with its heart full of love, could do greater things in the world than a strong man without love."

All the little mice drew a deep breath.

"Oh, my mudder!" said Toto.

They never forgot their mother's words.



Miss Mag Pye had an ungovernable passion for all kinds of bright things.

It was high joy to her to see the brilliant ray leap from the heart of the diamond, the fire-flame of the ruby, the sea-green of the emerald, the soft moonlight shimmer of the pearl, the sky-like changes of the opal, the laughing blue of the sapphire like Pet's bright eyes.

She did not care for these things to adorn herself, but for the pleasure of beholding all this treasured wealth of imprisoned light,—gleaming, sparkling, shimmering, dazzling, darting, changing with every stray sunbeam or passing cloud! Mag revelled in the beauty of her stolen trinkets in her nest at the top of a high tree.

She had always that cunning little eye of hers on the look-out.

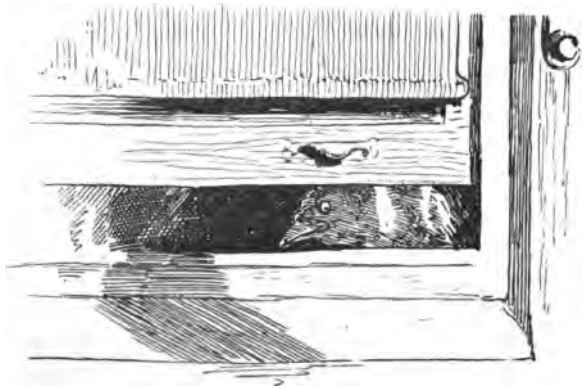
She had set her heart on a brooch worn by a pretty lady who lived in a large house near the tree where Mag's nest was, and her bedroom window was quite close to this tree.

"Whatever good is it to her?" said Mag; "she hardly ever sees it: she puts it at her neck, where she cannot possibly get a good sight of the lovely rays of light that it sends forth. Then at night she locks it up in a dark box. Indeed it passes most of its time there. I daresay the poor gem must feel sad, for light is its life. After being shut up for no one knows how long in a dark mine, he must be disappointed to find he is not to live in the light now he *has* come up from the bowels of the earth. Poor thing! I shall get the dear imprisoned creature out as soon as ever I can."

So Mag Pye brooded over her craving for the jewel day by day; and so she reasoned with herself till she felt how very brave and heroic was the act she had resolved on.

She stayed up late one night to watch the window, peeping through the spaces in the blind. She saw the pretty lady come to her

room and seat herself before the glass. Then she took her brooch from her bosom and threw



it on the table as if she scorned it. Then she threw her arms up, and clasping her hands behind her head, rested it upon them, and so sat thinking, thinking. Then she went to bed, but left her brooch where she had thrown it.

"Ah, ah!" said Mag, "at last I have my chance! The maid always comes to open the window before the lady rises, and I will fly in and have the brooch in a moment (if she does not see it) as sure as my name is Mag;" and she gave a little gleeful chuckle and hopped off to roost.

The next morning she was awake early, with her cunning eye fixed on the window.

"Ah, my darling!" said she, "you shall soon be free. You shall not pass half your life in darkness. Here in my nest you will not lose one sunbeam. You shall revel in and reflect every lovely hue in nature. Your father, the rainbow, will rejoice to see his likeness in you; your cousins, the dewdrops, shall visit you; and though I don't know how, I feel sure the sun is nearly related to you—your great-grandfather perhaps. How you must love him! You will dance and smile when you see him, you will—"

Now this was very nice talk of Mag Pye's, and she was going on quite excited with her own eloquence, when her uncle, the raven, who she did not know was near her, made her start by adding—"wink."

There was nothing the spiteful old fellow enjoyed so much as "taking Mag down a bit." He chuckled to himself when he could mortify her.

"As if King Diamond could do anything so low!" said Mag. "Wink, indeed!"

"Oh, can't he?" said her uncle with that slight sneering smile of his that he knew did so torment her.

He was a vulgar-minded old bird.

"Well, good-bye, my dear," said he, when he had enjoyed Mag's mortification for a time. "I am going off to a feast. I've been round the coast this morning and I saw plenty of what the horse calls "foul sights." And the raven flew away.

By and by came the dove.

"I have had such a lovely flight round the coast," said she.

"Ah!" replied Mag, "my uncle has just gone that way, but I should not think you enjoyed your trip much, for he says there are many foul things lying along the coast."

"I flew high," said the dove; "I saw nothing

painful, but many lovely things. I saw beds of sea-weed, and sea-pinks on the cliffs, and much that was fair and sweet, and very often I raised my eyes to the sky, where all was calm and beautiful, so I neither saw nor thought of any evil thing." And the dove flew away.

Just then the horse came under the tree.

"How is it," asked Mag Pye, "that the dove and my uncle tell such different tales, yet both have been the very same road?"

"The dove's eyes are pure," said the horse, "so she sees only what is lovely. The raven (excuse me for speaking so of your uncle)"—

"Certainly," said Mag readily.

"Is himself unclean, and so nothing evil escapes his keen scent, his searching malicious gaze; therefore he and the dove will certainly differ in the accounts they bring you of the very same journey. While, as I say, no foul sight or tainted thing will escape him, the dove with her pure eyes will behold only all that is fair and hopeful, and if forced to turn her sweet eyes upon what is evil, she will look upwards to the sky and rest them there."

"There is a difference between her tastes and my uncle's, I see," said Mag.

"A difference in their very nature," said the horse. "I mix much among men and women, and I find they are either ravens or doves. I heard a conversation between two ladies, one on my back, one on my wife's, that proves this."

"Dear me," said Mag, who was very inquisitive, "*would* you mind relating it; your conversation *is* so improving, so brilliant, I can listen to you and keep my eye on that window at the same time;" and she came hopping down close to him, keeping her cunning little eye on the window.

The horse smiled slightly. He was a noble creature, and a powerful reasoner, for he could carry the heaviest farmer in the parish safely

over a five-barred gate—but still he was but a horse, and this flattering speech of Miss Mag's made an impression.

"Well," said he, "I'll just give it you briefly, to explain my meaning.

"Mrs. Malice began. 'I employed yesterday afternoon in calling on Mrs. Hart, Mrs. Wilson, and Mrs. Ross,' said she.

"'I hear Mrs. Hart has very nice children,' said Mrs. Downright, my mistress.

"'Yes,' replied Mrs. Malice; 'but I think a person with a young family should not spend her afternoons in bed. The children did not dare to rouse her, so I never saw her. I shall not call again. I only did so as a matter of duty. She is such a lazy woman; dear, dear!'

"Mrs. Malice always ends her speeches with a little sigh and 'dear, dear,' as if lamenting over the folly of every one she knows.

"'Then I went,' said she, 'to Mrs. Wilson's, but she quite tired me with the story of her sicknesses and domestic worries. Such a mistake to dwell on them so—dear, dear!'

"'I thought you said you were fond of little Mrs. Wilson,' said my mistress.

"'So I am; but being fond of a person does

not prevent our seeing their faults,' said Mrs. Malice.

"'Perhaps not altogether; but it *does* prevent our talking of them, and so injuring and lowering them in other people's eyes, cooling their friends and serving their enemies. As I once heard a clever child say, 'Such love is a sham, and God sees it is.'

"After this speech of Mrs. Downright's you may be sure Mrs. Malice did not stay long with us.

"Mrs. Downright patted me and said, 'Give me a good run, Chanticleer, to get rid of the ill-temper such talk gives me.' So we set off over the Downs.

"By and by we met Mrs. Cheery on Romeo, my son. We ambled side by side to let our ladies chat.

"'I called on Mrs. Hart and Mrs. Wilson yesterday,' said she.

"'Ah!' said Mrs. Downright; 'but you did not see Mrs. Hart, I expect. Mrs. Malice called and found her in bed.'

"'I saw the children, such darlings!' said Mrs. Cheery; 'they said, 'Papa likes Mama to have a long sleep in the afternoon, for she is

awake with baby in the nights; and she likes to be bright and fresh when Papa comes home.' So they gave me some tea, and I was so charmed with them for taking such care of their mother.'

"'You called on Mrs. Wilson too?'

"'Yes,' said Mrs. Cheery; 'Mrs. Malice was there, and poor Mrs. Wilson poured out all her troubles to her, though I fear it is not wise to help her to dwell upon her vexations; but Mrs. Malice appears so sympathetic.'

"'She is not,' said Mrs. Downright shortly.

"'Oh, no,' said Mrs. Cheery; 'we know that well, but her manner is deceptive. Poor Mrs. Wilson is really in a very weak and nervous state, and while one pities her and feels sure her sufferings are very real, I believe the best thing for her is, in a short visit, to divert her mind and if possible amuse her. She is an excellent wife and mother;' and Mrs. Cheery went on to speak of many fine traits in Mrs. Wilson's character. 'She is very sensitive,' said she, 'and she lets what other people say torment her, and some of her relations are always finding fault with her, blaming her for her ill-health, calling her fanciful, and this really makes her

fretful, and adds to the mischief. No good ever comes of fault-finding.'

"We must," said the horse, "train each other by searching for and cultivating the *good* that is in most of us; for good, being of its very nature stronger than evil, *must*," said the emphatic horse, "triumph in the end. Above all," said this excellent beast, "let us beware, on peril of our higher interests, of crushing self-respect, especially in the young. I have seen the finest animals, from men up to horses, ruined by this fatal process. We may easily ruin a much finer nature than our own by sneers and snubs and 'dear, dears.'"

Mag Pye did not care in the least for all this moralizing. She had her sly eye fixed on the window, watching for the maid to open it and

let in the sweet morning air; but she said, "True, quite true!" in a way that quite satisfied the noble, simple-minded horse.

At last she heard the welcome sound, and hopping to the window (with every appearance of her mind being full of any other thought) she saw with joy that the brooch still lay there, that the maid had left the room, and that the lady lay fast asleep, with her silky hair lying in curls on her pillow. So Mag hopped in, pounced eagerly on the brooch, and had it safe in her nest in no time.

"There! I've done a good deed," said she; "poor, oppressed King Diamond!" and she felt so good and grand.

By and by the lady rose, and the first thing she did was to look for the brooch; she had forgiven it by this time.

"Gone!"

She rang wildly for the maid, and they searched everywhere. Then she dressed in great agitation, and ran to tell her papa. Her papa sent for the police, and they suspected the servants; and when they had all been charged one by one, they packed their boxes angrily and left, refusing all apologies. Then

papa sent to a large town for a man who was very sharp and clever.

The man came, and they told him everything.

"Anything else missing?" he asked.

So they made a list, and it was found that a ring, a spoon, several thimbles, and Pet's bright shilling had disappeared.

Then the man said "he would smoke a cigar in the garden. The air was a treat to him." So he went into the garden.

As he was strolling among the flower-beds Pet came running down the path, with her bright hair streaming behind her, her blue eyes sparkling, her red mouth laughing, showing her white little baby teeth. She ran right to him and caught him round the knees, and looked up into his face with shouts of laughter.

"What's 'ou name?" said she.

"Dada," said he; "that's what my little girl calls me."

"What's 'ou come to see us for?" said she.

"To find your bright shilling," said he.

"I know who dot my sillin'," said Pet.

"Do you, dear? tell me, and I'll soon get it for you."

"Papa won't let me tell 'ou, I dont fink," said Pet.

"Ah!" said Dada, "then we mustn't say any more about it," and he let Pet hold one of his fingers and trot by him, while he told her a story about a beautiful doll he had seen. "If we can find your bright shilling," said he, "we might buy that doll; let us see if you dropped it among the strawberry plants."

"No," said Pet, "but I must not tell 'ou. Misser Pye got my sillin'."

But the man was deep, he pretended to hunt among the strawberry plants, though he had heard fast enough.

By and by he said, "Mind you don't tell any one Mr. Pye has got your shilling."

"No, no," said Pet.

"If you don't, I'll find it for you."

Then Pet kissed him, and said, "More kisses if 'ou finds my sillin', Misser Dada."

He had a little Pet of his own, and he liked those baby kisses; so he made up his mind he would find Pet's shilling.

There are several bright shillings in the world, and they are very much alike.

So he said, "We'll find that bright shilling,

A PHILOSOPHER AND A THIEF. PAGE 40.

Missie, only we must not say a word about Mr. Pye, or Papa will scold us."

Pet nodded.

"He often comes to see you, eh? brings you sugar-plums?"

"Yes, sugar-plums," said Pet.

"Do you love him?"

"Not now, he dot my sillin'."

"Oh no, no; you dropped it among the strawberries; we'll find it, you'll see. I've come a purpose."

Pet was delighted with the kind man who had come a long way on purpose to find her shilling.

By and by her papa came down the garden, and Pet ran away.

"This is a very quiet place, sir," said Mr. Sharp, "scarcely any one you don't know the name of, I suppose."

"No, indeed, there are not fifty families in this village," said Pet's papa.

"I might as well take down a few names, sir," said Mr. Sharp, bringing out his note-book.

So he wrote down the names, and Pet's papa described the owners. When he had written a

good many he said, "I think that will do, sir. I've got most of the neighbours."

"Well, yes, there is only Mr. Brown, the rector, and his curate, Mr. Pye, that I have left out, I think."

But the man put his book away, as if he had not heard him.

"Is the rector a rich man, sir," he asked.

"No," said the papa, "he has a large family, and is poor enough."

"Curate poorer still, I suppose? Mr. Gye?

"Pye, Mr. Pye. Yes, he is poorer still; has a larger family too, but an excellent man."

"No doubt of it. Well, now, I'll take a stroll in the village, sir, and pick up all I can;" and away went Mr. Sharp.

Every one thought he had come down to look after a cottage that was to be let, and he chatted and gossiped with the villagers.

On the next day, Sunday, he went to church, and was very attentive to Mr. Pye's sermon.

Then he went back to his inn, and smoked quietly all afternoon.

The next day he spent chiefly with Pet in her papa's garden, and they had another hunt among the strawberry beds.

Not a word did he say about the brooch, and Pet's sister said to her papa, "Send him away, papa, he is a lazy man, and is enjoying himself in the country for a day or two. Let us have a man from London. All this time the thief is getting off with my brooch."

But that evening Mr. Sharp said, "I must ask you, sir, to let me sleep in the library to-night."

"So you've found the thief out, have you?"

"I hope I shall have him safe to-night, sir; you shall find him here in the morning, I think I can promise."

"You can let me in without any one knowing, if you like. Get Mr. Pye to come and have a long chat with you, sir, and as you let him out, after every one else is in bed, you can let me in, and no one will ever know I am in the house."

So Pet's papa asked no questions, for he saw Mr. Sharp did not wish to be asked even for his opinion.

But as Mr. Sharp was strolling that evening with Pet he made her very uneasy, for she heard him say to himself:

"Yes, I think I have the thief in my eye."

Pet once had had a little fly in her eye, and she knew how painful it was; so she was concerned for Mr. Sharp when she heard him say he had "a thief in his eye." She looked up at his eye.

"Dot a fief in you eye?" she said, bewildered and anxious; "dot a fief in you eye, Misser Dada?"

"No, no, an eyelash," said Mr. Sharp, wiping his eye.

Just then Mr. Pye came; he had some sugar-plums in his pocket, but Pet would not be coaxed; she ran away, and soon after went to bed.

Mr. Sharp had cautioned her papa and sister not to say one word as to who he was, even to Mr. Pye, till the next day. So when Mr. Pye came they did not show him the revolver which was to be put in the library, and some strong cords. At first Mr. Sharp said he should not need them, he had his own weapons, but afterwards he said: "Very well, as you please;" so when Pet's papa let Mr. Pye out, he let Mr. Sharp in, and took him to the library and showed him all the preparations.

"All right, sir," said Mr. Sharp; "now, do

you go to bed; I see all the windows are carefully closed as I directed."

"See to your revolver, have your handcuffs ready, and don't hesitate to alarm the house if you are getting the worst of it, Sharp," said Pet's papa. "Do you want anything more?"

"I have all I want here, sir," pointing to a black bag. "I think you'll find I shall get him pretty quietly. You may come and see how we get on soon after daybreak, if you like, but not too soon, say six o'clock. Good night, sir."

So he was bolted firmly into the library, in case the thief should get the better of him and break out into the house.

As soon as Mr. Sharp was left alone he lay down on the sofa, covered himself with the rug, and went fast asleep. He never closed the shutters or even drew down the blind, or troubled his head to look at the revolver.

As soon as the day began to break he opened his eyes; rising gently, he took from the bag he had brought with him a cage, a net, and some bits of looking-glass, and some bright brass buttons. He opened the window quietly, and laid the glass and buttons where the sunbeams would fall on them. Soon they began

to glitter in the morning light. By and by he saw, from his hiding-place behind the curtain, Mag Pye come hop, hop, hop, with her head on one side and her artful old eye looking at the bright objects. She stole a brass button and took it to the top of a high tree. Then she came back for a bit of looking-glass, but Mr. Sharp threw the net over her and took her prisoner in the Queen's name. He popped her in the cage and left her to think, while he got a ladder and soon found her nest. He brought it down, and Mag Pye had to bear to see him turn over her hoards. There, sure enough, were the brooch, ring, and thimbles.

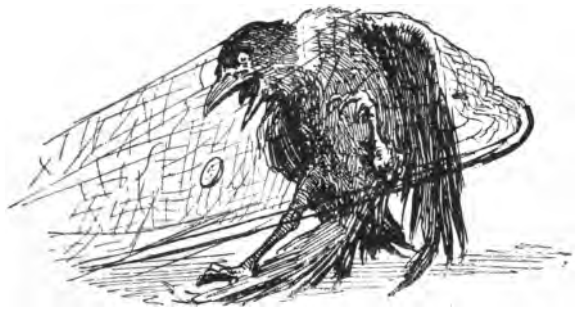
"Where is Pet's bright shilling, I wonder?" said Mr. Sharp, "I don't see it. Oh yes! here it is," he said at last, as he drew his closed hand from his pocket. He was so deep, you see, he would not own even to himself how deep he was. "Here it is, sure enough!" said he. "I must have overlooked it."

And now, there in the nest, beside the brooch, lay a bright new shilling.

It *was* a punishment to Miss Mag to have to stand close by all her bright treasures, and not be able to get at them.

"I wish I'd had nothing to do with King Diamond," said she, "no good ever comes of helping royal prisoners to escape;" and she cast such sullen looks at him.

By and by she said, "I daresay he *does* wink." This was mean of her. It showed a



very little mind, after all her flattery and sentimental speeches, to find a pleasure in accusing him of vulgarity.

Now the sun was shining gloriously, and daylight was pouring in at the window.

"The moment that pretty baby named Mr. Pye I suspected you, madam," said Mr. Sharp; "she's earned her shilling."

Soon a tap was heard at the door.

"Have you got him?" asked the papa.

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Sharp.

"Safe?"

"Perfectly safe."

"Is it Bob Smith?"

"I know it's Misser Pye," said Pet.

"How dare you say so, Pet?" cried her sister.

"Have 'ou got my sillin', Misser Dada?" screamed Pet.

"Yes, Missie."

Pet capered about for joy.

The servants that remained were all excitement. The butler betted it was Bob Smith; the groom that it was Dan Jones; the servant-girls were pale and nervous, for they knew they had been encouraging some ungentlemanly sweethearts.

"Who can it be?" each one asked the other. They guessed every name they could think of. Sometimes when you have been guessing a long time you will find it is a good plan to ask.

"Is it a parishioner, Sharp?" asked Pet's papa.

"It is, sir," answered Mr. Sharp.

"Any one we know?"

"Yes, sir, I should think so."

"Has he been at my house before?"

"Pretty often, I should say, sir, but unbeknown to you maybe."

The servant-girls looked scared.

"What name, Sharp?"

"Pye, sir. We've got the brooch."

"Misser Pye, have 'ou dot my sillin'?" said Pet.

Her papa turned white and tottered.

Her sister burst into tears.

"And you whipped Pet for saying so, Papa," sobbed her sister.

"My dear! I should as soon have suspected the archbishop," said her father in great distress.

"Oh Pye! my dear old friend! has it come to this? How could you let your poverty tempt you? Will it distress you to see me?" cried Pet's father.

He dismissed the servants, out of respect for Mr. Pye's feelings, and begged to be let in.

"Speak to me, Pye. Why doesn't he answer, Sharp?"

"Sulky, sir," answered Sharp.

"Will you let me in?"

"In a few minutes," answered Mr. Sharp, who was enjoying the scene, sitting quietly on a chair.

"He can't be dangerous. Why won't you

open the door?" called Pet's papa in greatly distressed tones.

"Oh don't hurt him!" sobbed his daughter.

"Misser Pye, 'ou very naughty to steal my sillin'," cried Pet.

"Pet, how can you be so horrid?" said her sister, pushing her away.

Mr. Sharp now slowly began to unbolt the door.

"Here is the thief, sir, and here's the missing property," said the clever thieftaker.

They all stood like stone for a minute; then there was a laugh, peal on peal.

The servants came back, and they laughed loudest, especially the maids.

Mag stood looking sullen and humiliated, as she witnessed her hoard turned over and every one claiming their property.

Pet seized her shilling, and hugged Mr. Sharp; "Misser Pye put it in a nest," she persisted.

Just then Mr. Pye, happening to pass on his morning walk, was called in to hear the story amid shouts of laughter, in which he joined.

He explained why Pet suspected him. He

had been conjuring with her new shilling and made it disappear mysteriously, so when it really was lost she considered it was his doing.

Every one forgave poor little Pet.

As for Mag Pye, her fine talk of "rescuing the captive" was at an end, for she was sentenced to imprisonment for life herself, and given to Pet.

The horse heard the whole story, and was good enough to draw several morals. "We must on no account think that two wrongs can ever make a right," said he. "We must try not to cheat ourselves into the belief that we are acting from lofty motives when, in fact, we are pleasing ourselves; but this is a very common blunder, though most serious. And above all," concluded this wise animal, "we must not do evil that good may come. Not until I have with my own eyes seen a cluster of grapes spring from thistle seed, will I believe that

anything but evil in tenfold crops can spring from evil, even when disguised as good." Having delivered these valuable remarks, the admirable horse trotted complacently to his stable.

"What he says," added Mr. Pye, "is Eternal Truth."

THE TENDER HEARTED ANT.

An innocent amiable snail was passing an ant who was scurrying along. The snail was meditating.

"Why," said he to the ant, "I was just thinking about you. I've come from the peach-tree, and I heard the man say to his little man, — 'Next to man, my dear, we believe the ant to be the most clever animal that lives.'"

"To think of that now!" he added, bending his horns admiringly towards the ant.

"Well, of course; do you suppose I didn't know that?" said the ant, preparing to bustle off.

'But wait, stop a bit," cried the snail, "you're always in such a hurry, can't you stop and have a chat?"

"A chat, indeed! why, I've got fifty things to do. Those tiresome creatures have gone off again."

"Who have gone off again? What tiresome creatures?" asked the snail slowly.

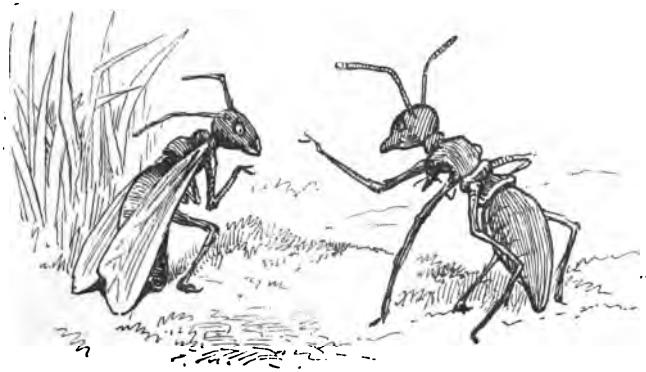
"Why, those mothers, and if we don't get them back at once they will start off housekeeping on their own account."

"Why shouldn't they, poor things?" said the amiable snail. But the ant had no time to stop to argue with him. Off she bustled as fast as her little legs could carry her, till she came up to an ant larger than herself with two whitish shining wings.

"How very tiresome you are, my dear!" said she irritably; "what trouble you cause me! I had to leave my work to look after you. You must come back at once."

"Why must I?" asked the poor winged ant, who seemed to be enjoying herself in the sunshine. "I don't want to come." But the cross little ant seized her by the leg, and hauled her off without any more words.

"I was thinking," said the winged ant, "that I would go off and make a home of my own, and not come back any more to the hill."



"Oh! were you? well, you'll do nothing of the kind—you're to come back to the hill."

"It's rather hard I can't have my own children to myself," said the big ant.

"Stuff! what do you know about children? come, make haste, make haste."

"I've had several, I ought to know something about them. I'm a mother, you know."

"A mother indeed! What do mothers know about children?"

"I do believe you think they know nothing about them," said the mother angrily.

"Of course I do, I'm sure of it; do you

suppose I couldn't teach any mother her duties?"

"How can you tell? you never really brought up a baby. You only see other people's, and help with the little ones. You've never really had the anxiety of a lot of young grubs actually on your mind. I don't believe, you little fidget, you could bear it one day with your love of rule and discipline."

But the little black bustling ant went on dragging the mother, who was not very strong, till she got her home to the hill. As they got near the hill where all the ants lived it was a busy scene. Some were being sent out to bring back some more mothers, and some were standing guarding the entrance to the colony.

As the ant who had charge of the mother she had brought back, passed one of these watchmen she lowered her two fine horns; so did the other.

She took the mother to her place and said, "Now don't bother me by going off again, stop there and lay your eggs, and *we'll* look after the little ones." So the big ant laid her eggs and was very proud of them.

She was a very good and wise mother, and

would have been glad of the help of the other ants, but they helped her in such an interfering way, as if they knew best about her babies. No mama likes that. They would come in and bustle off with her eggs to put them in the sunshine or out of the wet; they were for ever flying about with them. The eggs were very tiny when first laid, but by and by they grew a little larger, then out of them came a tiny grub.

Such a hungry, greedy little thing! The mother really would have been most thankful for the help of the active nurse ants now, if only they had given it her in a nicer way; but they never asked her; they fed her children, carried them about just as they chose, and took all on themselves in such a self-satisfied way.

"You see WE are such wonderful folks," was their opinion; "what *we* do must be just the right thing."

When the little grubs grew up they spun for themselves a little covering like a larger egg, and there they lay, and when any little boy came into the garden, and with a kick upset the ant hill, the ants could be seen in such

excitement, rushing off with great babies on their backs, bigger than themselves. Many people call them ant eggs, but they are not, though they look just like eggs. The true eggs are much smaller.

At last the nurse ants cut open these egg-like

cases when the right time came, and out of each came a perfect ant.

One of these young ants was born very affectionate, and longed to see its mother. She went about asking every ant she met till she found her dear mother. But she scarcely knew her, for her wings were gone, and she had heard her mother had wings.

"Why, mama, you do look funny, such a big ant without any wings," said she. "What became of them?"

"I clipped them off, my dear, as we all do in time; and now I am pleased to find you are a good child, and don't forget mother. Come and see your brothers that have been under my own care."

So they all made friends, and were soon a party of busy workers, and helped to rear as convenient a building as any one could wish to see. Streets, galleries, large chambers all so perfect. Some were carpenters, some were masons. The best masons were yellow ants, they could with only earth and rain water make a strong cement with their tiny feet, and make a firm strong roof to their house.

When this little Blacky, as her mother named her, had been born some weeks she began to feel choky, and told a friend so.

"You are dirty, my dear," said her friend, "so am I, we must give each other a good cleaning."

Then she told Blacky to stand still while she rubbed and licked her, and made her quite fresh and clean, and then she made Blacky do

the same for her, and they were so refreshed and ran away quite shining.

Blacky lived a happy life, for she would not hurry and drive like some ants she saw. She would take time to look at pretty things, and to help any sick or sad insect.

One day she was nursing an old ant who was dying, and who said to her, "My dear, I have done a great deal of work in my time, but I think if I had my life to come over again, I would see more of the lovely flowers that grow in the garden where we lived. I would not be in such a bustle of business, for it keeps one's mind always on one's own works; and now I am going out of life, and I hardly have seen half a dozen of the flowers that grow in the fair garden which I now must leave. And I am sure I would be kinder, and spend more time over the sick and sad and weak, and not always be thinking, 'What comes next when this job is done?' My little mind—and it is only now I see how very little it was—was for ever in a work, I have had no time to enjoy myself, and now I must go." What the ant said made Blacky think.

"I will take time to see all the fair things

about me," said she; "I do think it is as much a duty very often to do what we like or ought to like, as to be for ever denying ourselves. I am sure if I were a mother, and put my children into a lovely house with all kinds of pretty things in it to please them, they would vex me very much if they went hurrying on and saying,—'Oh, I've no time to look at them or think about them.'"

So this little ant, though she did a proper share of work, *would* have some time for amusement, and if she saw any insect in pain or woe, she would leave off her building, for, said she, "there is no work to compare to that of helping a creature God made and that feels joy and pain."

Coming home once, they met the snail. "I *am* glad to see you," said the honest kind creature, "here's an ant drowning, and I don't know what to do for it."

A busy little party of workers, all with their own set task, was returning home; not one of them turned to help this poor ant but Blacky. They all said they must "stick to their post," "keep their rules," and so on.

"And let a fellow-ant die?" cried Blacky.

"No! not if I am stung to death for breach of orders will I leave a poor thing to suffer one little pain I can cure. Go on, all of you, go on your cruel way. I shall stay with this sinking fellow-creature." So she stayed, and lifted up the poor sick ant's heavy head, and spoke kind words, and did all she could for her.

"If only I could get a dry leaf I could put you on it, and make you so comfortable," said she. Just then two ants came running back to her.

"Oh, Blacky!" said they, "you are good; we both see how right you are. What is all our fine building, our fussy work, compared to this fellow being which God Himself has made? We both felt we should not have any good luck with our work, if we left His work in such a sad plight."

So they brought a nice dry leaf, put the wet ant on it, drew it to a warm shelter, and then they rubbed and tended her till she was able to crawl to a nice plum; a few sips of the juice made her quite strong, and she thanked her three little friends so fervently that they were quite touched.

"She might have died," said Blacky, "if

you nad not come to help me just when you did."

"If she had!" said her friend awe-struck. "Ah, if she had, what would the Maker of her have said?"

"He would hate the sight of our work," said the eldest ant.

"And I am sure," said Blacky, "we never could have asked Him then to make us wise to do it, but now we have helped His ant, His own work, He will make us get on with ours."

"Oh I'm sure He will, famously," said the other.

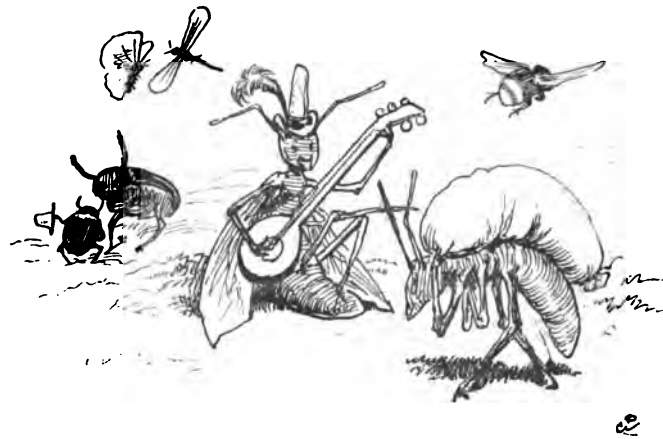
And it was true, for these three good ants prospered in all they did; they had such easy minds, that they loved their work, and went about it in such a calm way that it was done at once, and well done. Then they would all three go cheerfully off and make trips of pleasure to the rose-tree, or the jasmine, and open their ears to the sweet songs of the birds, and look up to the graceful butterflies, and they had a much happier life than the rest of the anxious, fidgeting, bustling, strict little workers.

The ant they had saved came to see them

sometimes, but often sent them her blessing and thanks by any of her folks who were coming that way. So these three little hearts glowed with joy to their life's end.

The snail came to see them.

"Ah," he said in his slow way, "if all ants only thought as you do; but they don't, they are mostly bustlers and hurriers."



A VERY sociable, merry, pleasant robin had a most discontented mate. She was always repining. He laid it to the fact of her having once spent a week shut up with Miss Tidy. Miss Tidy was a depressing little woman. She would own that she "saw the dark side of things" not with shame and pain, but as if it was rather a superior frame of mind. She had quite a nice little income, but she enjoyed telling herself, she couldn't afford this or that little pleasure. It was her nature, and if she had had a large fortune, she still would have taken a pleasure in saying this. Many a man

has had to bring up a wife and family on the income Miss Tidy had for her own use. She would watch her fire, and her gas, as if when those coals were gone and that gas bill paid, she would never see fire or light again. It is in some people to do this, just as others will be cheery and give all around them a feeling of plenty, yet spend less than Miss Tidy. Her income was as certain as any earthly thing can be, yet she suffered from anxiety, and long and carefully considered every sixpence she spent. When people do this they lose nearly all the sweetness of life; for God does not like it, it is not respectful to Him to fidget so over money, as if He really could not give us just as much as He sees fit in so many many ways, and kept a fierce eye on our sixpences.

Well, Mr. Robin, who was a most cheerful little fellow, grew very sad over the change in his wife.

She had strayed into Miss Tidy's room one very cold day, and Miss Tidy put her in a cage, and after she had taken her breakfast of thick bread and butter and her cup of coffee, she would give Robin the crumbs.

Miss Tidy's breakfast was a low-spirited

CHEERFUL MR. ROBIN AND HIS DISCONTENTED MATE. PAGE 66.

meal; a nice cheerful well-made round of good hot toast, a cup of strong rich coffee, half hot milk, would have put some life into her old frame, and when she came to reckon her monthly bills, she would have found hardly any difference in them. But as she ate the thick bread and butter and drank her coffee, of which a certain quantity must last so long, with just such a quantity of milk in it, she felt self-denying.

Sometimes we indulge ourselves most, when we think we are self-denying, we are such blind bats. Much better to make our homes, our meals, and all our surroundings as good, as bright, as pleasant as we can, and not always be stinting in our proper care of ourselves, often for the sake of a future which we may never see, and for which God has said, He will provide if we will but trust Him, or worse still, for the mere excitement of saving six-pences, or keeping within some sum we have fixed on.

Well, Mrs. Robin heard so much dismal talk during that week she could not get over it.

For Miss Tidy did not hide from any one that she was very wise, and that most other

folks were very silly, so a good many people thought she must be right, and she set many people moaning and repining, and among others poor weak Mrs. Robin.

When she got home to her husband, she copied Miss Tidy. She began at once.

"I wonder whether I've done right to fly away after all, I'm only come home to be a burden on you."

"What do you mean, Ruby? cheer up, old girl," said Robin.

"The worst of the winter's yet to come, and wherever our food is to come from I can't think."

"Well, don't think, my dear; you've had nearly enough for to-day. Eat this bit of grub I found, and let's go to roost. Don't worry, my dear, I'll take care of you," said cheery little Bob.

Mrs. Bob smiled a sad and plaintive smile.

"I don't doubt you, my dear, but—" and she gave a doleful sigh.

"There, go to sleep, old lady," said Robin, "you'll be all right when you wake up; you're tired, and that makes everything look dark."

So he truly thought, but the next morning, after they had had their early service of song, to Bob's dismay she began to sigh again.

"Life is very difficult," said she, borrowing a favourite expression of Miss Tidy's.

Bob stared at her.

"Come, my dear, this won't do at any price. Life is delightful."

"It's a trying world," and she shook her head.

"A charming world! Why, just look, my dear, look round for one moment, it's quite blessing enough to be born among such beauty."

So she looked round on the wonderful sight —the hoar-frost trimming up the bushes and trees, the sun shining and sparkling on it.

"Now," said Robin, "what do you say to that sight? Why, old Mag Pye has a stone in

her nest that she stole, a jewel she calls it, but it's no more to be compared with such a sight as this, my dear! yet many people will give anything to get a lot of those stones, who never care to look at such a lovely scene as this."

As he had just come in with a nice breakfast, Mrs. Bob could not groan over her own troubles, so she began over other people's.

"Fearful for the poor sparrows," and her little head went from side to side.

"Well my love," said Bob, "I am sure we only weaken ourselves by groaning over our own troubles or those of others; now, do make up your mind to enjoy your breakfast."

"Where's dinner to come from?" said the woebegone little bird.

"Why, where breakfast came from," said sturdy Bob.

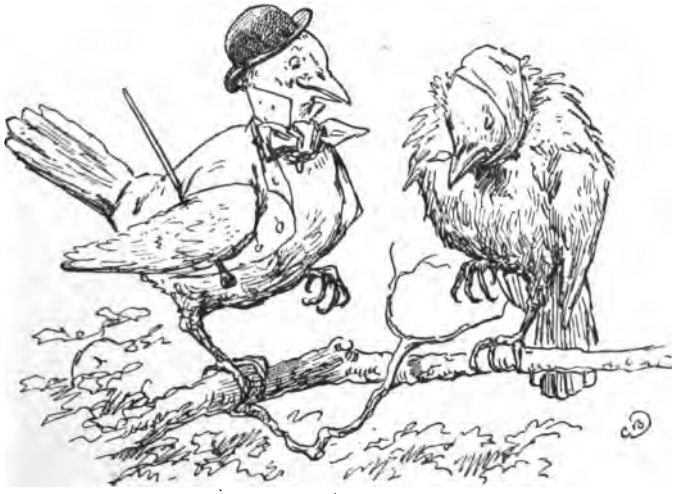
"Ah, my dear, you have such spirits, you are so strong."

"Well, there's something in that," said he, for he had a manly little heart, and he felt for those weaker than himself. "I daresay you are not well, dear. Stop at home nice and warm, and I'll go and forage for dinner."

"She gave a sigh—"Yes, go, my dear. I shall

be lonely, but I can bear it, I don't want to be a hinderance to your pleasure."

"A hinderance to my pleasure," repeated he



bewildered, "why, you won't be that, far from it; come by all means if you feel inclined."

So with the air of an injured bird she stepped on to a twig and they flew off together. They flew to Miss Tidy's window, it was open, and they stood pecking some crumbs while Miss Tidy talked to her niece, a young person who was going to a situation as governess, and who seemed at first in good spirits about it.

But Miss Tidy shook her head, and thought

of many difficulties likely to turn up. Then when she had brought her niece to a nice desponding frame of mind, she gave her some gold, and sent her away desponding.

"Why," said Bob, "she had much better have given her cheerful words. *Money* is not the best gift, I see. I see now what it is has upset this poor little wife of mine. I would have given a year of my life rather than she should have got hold of this dismal spirit." So he got her away from Miss Tidy's, but the mischief was done.

That day Bob in his flight was wondering what he could do to cheer up his wife, when he flew in at an open window, and found himself in a church. He perched on the altar-rail and listened to a glorious song of praise. Then he saw the people sink on their knees. Soon after there was a burst of joyful song that filled Robin's little heart with ecstasy, he too sang with all his might from the depth of his grateful heart. By and by he heard some words that filled him with astonishment and joy. Then he joined in one more burst of praise and flew out to take home the glad tidings to his dear wife.

"My dearest," he said, "I bring you such good news that will cure your sadness at once

and for ever. I heard some strange grand words, read out of a book that I am sure is truth, and somehow I feel in me that those words *must* come to pass, and are a cure for all woe. So when I have told you, make haste to tell Miss Tidy, and she will never even see 'a dark side' again. These are the wonderful words:—'Not one sparrow is forgotten before God.' That is for us, my dear, so *we* never can fret any more. But there is something better for Miss Tidy: 'Ye are of more value than many sparrows.' Go, love, bear these words to her that she may fret no more. Tell her that 'not *one* sparrow is forgotten, and that she is of more value than many.' She will let that poor niece know, whom she made so dismal, and set *her* right too."

Mrs. Bob hid her face.

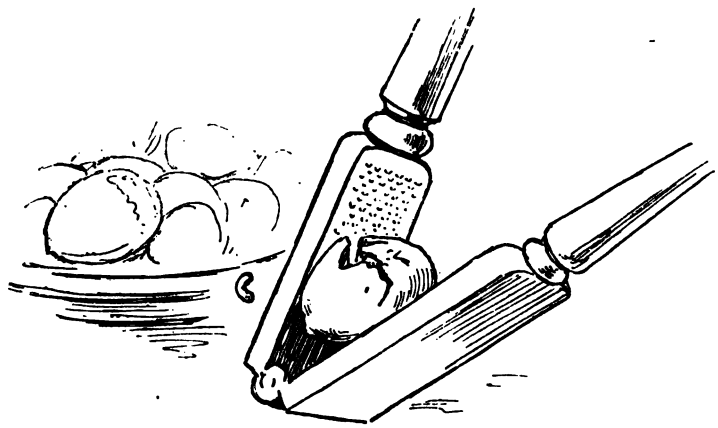
"Bob, my dear, that beautiful place was a church, where men go to hear the Truth. I never will groan any more; but it is of no use to go to Miss Tidy, for before she takes her breakfast she goes to church. She has heard those words all her life, but they do her no good."

Bob's honest little heart was wrung. He stood awe-struck. "Does Miss Tidy go to that

place week by week, and hear those comfortable words, and dare to repine? Ah! she does not believe that book! But of course she does not dare to join those songs of praise, for that is but to take a lie on her lips. I must be alone a while, my dear, my heart is so full.

"Not *one* sparrow! Not one little weak sparrow forgotten!"

He flew into a large tree, and, after a time of silence, he burst into such a song of joy as his wife had never heard before. Flying to his side, God's two dear birds poured out their thankful little hearts in a gush of rich melody.



THE PROUD AND DISOBEDIENT MAGGOT.

On a tree in an old garden hung a bunch of nuts, three in the bunch. In each of these nuts lived a plump little maggot, two little brothers and an elder sister. It is not often that maggots have names, but these *were* named. The little boys were Roly and Chubby, and the sister was Miss Fattie.

They lived a quiet life in their homes, on which they fed day by day. It was indeed a life of peace and plenty, and they could talk to each other as they peeped out of the little holes. (A bird told them they were brothers and sister.)

One day they felt such a shock.

Miss Fattie stopped nibbling to think. "Something has happened, I am sure," said she; "I must prepare my mind or I shall be in some sad trouble."

Roly and Chubby felt the shock. "Oh!" said Roly, "never mind; I am safe shut up in my nice nut. *I'm* all right;" and he went on nibbling. Chubby thought a minute, then he said, "Oh! sister's in the next nut; she'll take care of me;" for he was a loving, trusting little thing, and *he* went on nibbling.

Well, they went on moving, and Roly and Chubby went on eating, but Miss Fattie gave all her mind to serious thought, so that she might be prepared to act. "I know my dear little brothers are in my bunch," said she; "I must look after them."

By and by the great basket in which their nuts had been placed, with many others, was carried to market, and Miss Fattie and her brothers were sold to a green-grocer. That very day a lady came and bought them, and now there was nothing but tossing about, first into a paper bag, then into a dish; and now the poor tired little country folks had a little rest.

By and by they were carried along and put

down on a table, and they heard such a noise of talk and laughter they were quite confused. Presently a fearful crash quite stunned them. Chubby's nut was burst open with a noise like thunder, and the next moment Miss Fattie came tumbling out of hers.

"Oh, dear Fattie!" cried Chubby, running to her; "what a *time* since I saw you! What *is* this noise, and wherever are we?" and he laid his little nose on her plump white neck.

Another shock and Roly came tumbling on to them, with his two little eyes quite round with fear.

"I am afraid, my dear little brothers, our end is come," said Miss Fattie; "but keep close to me under this green husk."

Chubby crept close to his kind sister, but by and by Roly would peep out. Then he thought he should like to go about and see the world, but Fattie begged him not to run such risks.

"I see quite a mountain of nuts some way off, and I had nearly eaten mine; so I shall go," said he.

Not a word Miss Fattie and Chubby could say would he hear. He crept off to the side of the plate, then he fell off and hurt himself.

"Come back, dear!" whispered Miss Fattie, and pushed a bit of husk to him to climb on. But he caught sight of his little fat form in the bright table, and he was quite pleased with it, and off he marched so proud.

By and by a gentleman caught sight of him coming up the table. "Here comes a little traveller," he cried. "Now, Brown, bet on him. Here is my little man;" and he put another little maggot he found on his plate by Roly's side so that they might run a race. Roly won it; but a gentleman near him took him up on the end of his knife and put him on his plate, when he fell into some salt and soon died in great pain.

Meanwhile Chubby kept quite close to his sister, and no one saw them under the green husk; so they went quietly on eating a nice nut and enjoying the milky juice. By and by the noisy gentlemen left the table.

"Now," said Miss Fattie, "let us creep away quick to a plate where there is no salt."

So they made haste, and were soon on a nice plate, where they hid again.

"Now we can do no more but wait and hope for the best," said Fattie.

"I will do all you tell me, sister," said Chubby, "for I see how wise you are. Poor Roly might have been here so snug with us."

Miss Fattie said, "Roly was always proud and self-willed, I expect;" and she sighed.

"Fattie," said Chubby, "will you tell me something about our childhood, about papa and mama, and what we did when we were babies? However did we get into our nuts?"

"My dear, *I* can't tell you," said Fattie. "The first thing I remember was being in a soft nut."

"I had nearly eaten mine," said Chubby. "I begin to feel comical, as if I should like to bury myself and go to sleep."

Just then the servant came in, threw all the nutshells into a basket, and Fattie and her brother with them, and they were thrown out on a heap of rubbish. There were some flowers, much too fresh to be thrown away, lying on this heap; and as the little maggots were chatting a moth settled on the flowers and listened to them.

"Does it puzzle you to know how you came into your nuts?" said she. "Well, I can tell you all about your mama, for I saw her put you in."

"Did she make the hole in the side, then?" said Chubby. "However could she? My teeth are much too soft."

"Your mama, my dears, was not a maggot; but I will tell you all I know. I had had my wings for some time, for *I* was not always a moth, when, as I was sitting on a nut-tree watching the young nuts, I saw an insect like a small lady-bird come flying to a bunch of three nuts. She had long, branching sort of horns on her head, and very strong jaws. She pierced the three soft nuts easily, and then laid an egg in each, and left you all three to hatch in the new nut, so you may well not remember your mama."

"Then what would have happened if we never had been turned out of our nuts?"

"You would have got very drowsy."

"There!" said Chubby, "I *said* I felt drowsy."

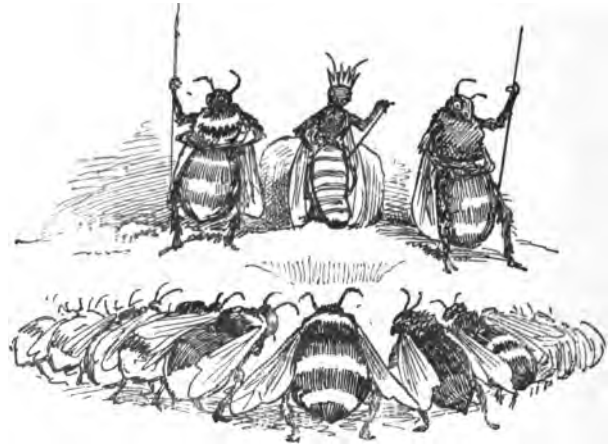
"You would have crawled out of your nuts and crept into the earth, when you would have lost your activity and shrunk into a quiet state. After a time you would have come out of this state very lively, with wings—in short, just what your mama was when I saw her."

"What shall we do now?" asked Chubby.

"I advise you to stay on this heap, find some of the nuts that were left on the plates and feed on them. You are both near the day you will want to sleep in the earth for a time, then you will wake to a new life and rise high in the air."

So Fattie and Chubby thanked the kind brown moth that gave them such sensible advice. They did what she told them, and soon were two fine insects, and then they laid eggs in nuts as their mama had done. They had been meek and patient, and now they were rewarded. They were content to do their best and wait quietly till help came.

It is the wisest thing we can do.



QUEENS

THE day Belle saw brown Bee was a very busy and important day in the hive where it lived.

I must first tell you Bee had a sister born the very same day, named Bee-bee. She was very weak, poor thing, rather nervous, and more easily flustered than bees generally are.

Well, they were a happy hive, had very few quarrels, for they were so constantly employed that there was no time for wrangling, and Bee-bee was very happy, for Bee was good to her, and so protected her that no one found out she was excitable.

The day Bee had met Belle and Beauty, he found Bee-bee waiting and watching for him near the door of the hive, her two little eyes round with anxiety.

"Oh, Bee, I'm so glad to see you! there is such a fuss! I'm sure something has gone wrong. The queen has gone mad, I think, and I *am* so frightened I'm quite tottering."

"So I see," said Bee, "but there's nothing much the matter I'll be bound; there, help me to get rid of this sticky load, and I'll soon find out all about it."

"Whatever is this, Bee?" said Bee-bee. "I never saw this stuff before."

"Yes you have," said Bee; "I have been getting that brown shining gum that is on the buds of trees, to line the cells, and mend the places in the hive that want mending, you've seen it often."

"Was it this I saw you kneading up with some wax the other day, Bee?"

"Yes, to be sure, and then Buzzie mended that crack with it, that was it."

Just then a great disturbance took place. From the edge of the comb hung three cells something the shape of little pears. These three cells were called the Royal Cells, and in each of these the Queen-bee had laid an egg.

Then this egg turned into a small grub something like a maggot, and the good nurse

bees fed it every day with nice food, made of meal from flowers, honey and water.

Well, these grubs had been fed some days, when all of a sudden, one day, the queen began to fly about in such a wild way, running over these royal cells, popping partly into them, then out again, and in such a frantic state that the working bees were quite excited and all was confusion.

"Whatever is the matter, Bee?" said Bee-bee.

"The queen is about to leave the hive, dear. Which shall we do, go with her or stay here?"

"Oh!" said Bee-bee, "I cannot bear to think of leaving to seek a new home."

"But I love the queen so," said Bee, "we may never see her again;" and he half flew to the crowd that were gathering round the queen to fly away with her. But, looking at Bee-bee, and seeing how weak she was, how unfit to struggle with the world, he stood firm, as the queen, having assembled all her subjects who meant to follow her, spread her wings and sailed out of the hive, with a whole swarm of faithful friends.

When the bees who were out gathering

honey came back, the first news they heard was that the queen was gone. Then the elder ones said,—

"Now, we must be very careful to watch the royal cells, for the new queens are near coming out. The old queen knew this, and she knew that there can only be one queen in a hive, so she has had the good sense and kind feeling to leave rather than have to be obliged to put these new queens to death."

So some of the bees were set to guard the royal cells and watch for the moment the new young queens should pop their heads out.

In a few days the bees saw one young queen peep out, but they would not let her come, they directly sealed up the cell with wax, then the second and third queens they served in the same way, and kept them prisoners two days. Bee-bee was sorry to see Bee act so cruelly, as she thought; she fancied Bee meant to kill the queens.

"Oh, Bee!" said she, "how can you do so? poor dear queens!"

"My dear," said Bee, "if we let them out now they would die, they are not fit to fight with the world yet, but in two days more they

will get the use of their wings and fly so nicely.

"Oh, Bee-bee, we seldom do wrong, for we obey a wise Power; we do not wait a moment to ask why, and we always see the end is right."

"I beg your pardon, Bee," said Bee-bee meekly, "I will watch in future, not doubt you."

"Well then, Bee-bee, watch that first cell and you will see a great deal to surprise you, for the first queen is about coming forth."

Bee-bee fixed her eyes on the cell, and in another moment out flew the queen. She just looked round her, then flew to the other two royal cells, and tried to tear them open, and get at the queens to sting them to death.

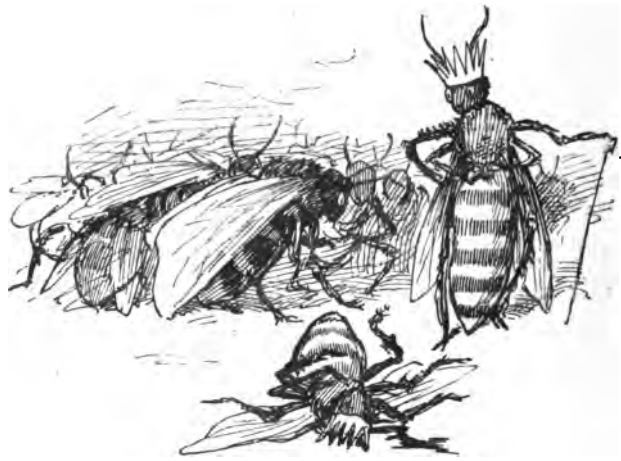
But the guards near these cells drove her away, and as she was very determined to get at the cells they at last were quite fierce with her.

"Now," said Bee, "watch, Bee-bee, and you will see a strange sight."

When the queen found they were getting too strong for her, and were determined to guard the other two queens, she suddenly left

off fighting and made a strange sound. In a moment all the bees were as if turned to stone, and could not touch her, but the moment she left off this curious noise they were active again.

At last she made up her mind to fight no more, but going to the entrance of the hive



she found a cluster of bees there, and away she flew with them following her.

In another day the other two queens came out, then *they* had a fight, and one being stronger than the other killed her, and remained queen of the hive. Then Bee told Bee-bee, that if there had been a dozen more

cells with young queens in them, this queen would have destroyed them all at once.

The fifth day after the queen had left her cell, she went out of the hive, first examining it well, then she flew away a short distance, then came back to be sure she knew her way home, then took a long flight. At last she came back amongst her subjects and never left them any more.

The working bees were very busy preparing cells for the eggs the queen would lay. These wise little creatures built their comb in a most wonderful way.

First, the wax workers prepared the mass of wax. Then some smaller bees formed the cells.

Bee and Bee-bee were wax workers, and Bee kept close to Bee-bee, so that if it was found she was very weak, Bee could help her. Then when the cells were ready, the queen laid a great many eggs, and left off for a time.

Then in the spring there was a grand time. She laid more than two thousand eggs. While these eggs were being laid the workers began to prepare the royal cells. This time they made a good many more than before—eleven.

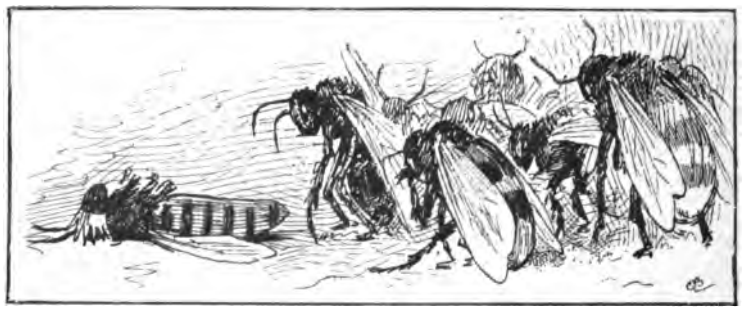
Well, all the bees were much excited over building the royal cells, they had got half through them, when a sad misfortune happened.

The queen died.

The bees gathered round her dead body, they would not leave it, they mourned sadly.

Then they consulted what to do.

There was, they feared, no chance of eggs ever being laid in the royal cells, so they went



to the cells where the first eggs were laid, and fixed on two or three of the finest grubs that had come out of the eggs; then they broke down the walls of the cells next them, and built a round pipe of wax round the grubs, and fed them with a different kind of food, so that they turned out different kind of grubs to their brothers who were out of their eggs at

the same time. In three days they built another little upright pipe that led out of the other, and into this the little grub crept, and at last came out, a Queen Bee!

Then the same thing happened as before. Several more queens were hatched, and they fought, and the strongest killed the others, and remained queen.

Well, this hive was very unlucky with its queens, for just as the bees were getting to love her as much as the old one, some naughty boy, only for fun, brought another queen, and took the true one out of the hive.

There was a commotion! and all the bees began to gather round the poor bewildered strange queen.

"Oh, Bee, do go and help her, they will kill her, they will kill her!" cried Bee-bee.

But Bee said sadly, "No, Bee-bee, we never sting a queen; but—"

"Oh, Bee, what then are they going to do with her? see! they keep closing round her, she cannot escape. If they don't mean to sting her, what will they do?'

"Don't ask me, Bee-bee, but you must know in the end."

"What is it, Bee? How sad you look! What will they do to her?"

"Starve her to death," said Bee solemnly.

"Oh, no, no, Bee!" cried Bee-bee trembling; "don't let them do such a wicked deed."

"I cannot interfere with the laws of the hive."

So the workers surrounded the poor queen and starved her to death.

"This is the most cruel law we have," said Bee-bee. "If she had not been put in till to-morrow afternoon they would have set her at liberty and made her queen; if not till next day we should have welcomed her as queen at once. These are the laws we have made respecting the royal succession. I cannot give you our reasons, Bee-bee."

In a few days a band appeared at the door of the hive and a new Queen Bee entered. There was a hum, "Bless the queen! save the queen!" and the bees hasted to do her homage.

"Oh, Bee! I don't think it's fair!" cried Bee-bee, "to starve one poor thing to death and make this fuss over another."

"Nothing earthly is perfect, my dear Bee-bee. Even bees have their faults," said Bee gravely.

"There are mysteries even in *their* lives."

THE PASSIONATE SPARROW.

"DEAR ME!" said a little hen sparrow as she perched on a tree, "whoever that man was who put it in print that 'birds in their little nests agree' could *not* have known anything of sparrows,—yet they say he was a Londoner too! Whatever I am to do with my children *I* don't know. To think that my five pretty smooth eggs should have turned into five such little tyrants!

"Something must really be done with Dick. He never is happy but when he is teasing and tormenting his brothers and sisters. I believe the rest would be good enough if that tiresome Dick would let them.

"His temper gets worse and worse, and I dread every time I go home to hear that he has done some most fearful mischief. Darling Birdie was as near as possible tumbling out of the nest yesterday. Chirpy is naughty, she does vex and tease him; but Birdie is so very gentle.

"I dread to go home with only a caterpillar. If I could find a nice long worm they could all get at. Well, I must go, I suppose, or they will be fighting worse than ever if they get cross;" and poor worried Mrs. Sparrow pounced on a caterpillar and flew to her nest in the water-pipe of a nice old house.

Oh the noise and bad conduct of those greedy little things was something frightful! They all pushed forward with their beaks open, great eyes staring, trampling on and pushing each other aside, moving backwards and forwards in a horrid manner.

Poor mother could not reprove them with her mouth full of caterpillar.

Strong Dick got it; then there was a fight. Their mother made them understand at last that she had found a nest of green caterpillars, and that if they were quiet she would

bring them one by one, when there would be plenty for all. "But mind," said she, "not one of you shall touch a bit of the next one till Birdie has had what she wants. She is so timid she never gets her share; and if any of you snatch at the next I will not bring you any more."

When mother was gone they began to tease Birdie, and Dick gave her a peck, and Pecky gave her a push, and Cocky said she was a sneak, but Chirpy her twin, took her part. All this made Birdie feel so low, that when the mother came back she had no heart for the caterpillar. Her mother saw at once they had been teasing her, and scolded them well.

Then when she had gone, Dick called Birdie a sneak once more.

Cocky liked to vex Dick sometimes, so he said, "Birdie wasn't a sneak," and there was a quarrel, and the screeching reached their mother's ears, so that she came flying back, and, seating herself in the midst of them, gave them some good pecks right and left.

"Oh!" said she, "I wish your father would come home. There he is working so hard for you, so patiently trying to get a worm, he has

been watching his hole such a time, he must be quite cramped, poor dear, and you all going on in such an awful way—Oh dear, dear!"

By and by they all fell asleep, and soon the father came home.

"No use looking any more to-night, dear," said he, "I must be up the first thing in the morning; I must go out directly after morning songs. So! the little rogues are all asleep," and he looked at them with such pride. He was a worthy little father, and as he was out

most of the time providing for their wants, he did not quite feel for his poor worried wife.

"Oh, my dear!" said she, "you must do something with Dick, he is quite beyond me, and something sad will happen before long, I'm sure."

"Spirit, my dear," said he, "it is his high spirit. You must be firm with the children. It is no use giving them angry pokes and digs, you *must* be firm with them.

"But come, let us tuck our heads under our wings, for I must be off early. Bless them! they are quiet enough now. They are a fine family!" and the proud little father went off to sleep.

Early next morning he woke the children up to sing their hymn, and then off he went after his worm.

The little birds were more in awe of their father than they were of their mother, so they all sat quietly down to breakfast. There was plenty of worm, and all were satisfied.

Then the parents prepared to go off again, for dinner had to be thought of.

"Oh, my dear! pray talk to Dick before you go," said the mother.

"Yes, yes, I will. Now Dick, see to your little brothers and sisters; remember you are the eldest, and should feel a pleasure in giving way to them," and off flew the papa thinking he had put them all to rights!

Dick began to grumble as soon as they were alone.

"Why should *he* give up always?" he begged to ask. "Just because he was the eldest? Oh! Ah! yes; well, he shouldn't, so they needn't expect it; he hated to be forced to live with such little plagues, wished something would happen to let him live by himself. Now, then! where was Cocky coming to, he should like to know. Perhaps he wanted all the nest to himself."

Chirpy, who was very bright and lively, and so was a favourite with them all, now proposed a game.

They were to stand on each others' backs, she and Birdie taking it in turns to be top but one, and get a good look at the world over the drain-pipe.

This pleased them very much, and they began to scramble on each others' backs. Of course Mr. Dick must be the first.

He looked round, and said it was a splendid sight. Then he jumped down, and the next got up, till Birdie's turn came last of all. She was very much delighted.

"I always thought the drain-pipe was the world," said Birdie, so innocent.

"What a muff you are, Birdie!" said Dick, contemptuously.

Cocky liked to oppose Dick when it suited him. So he said,

"She's not a muff any more than you are. You thought the cistern was the sea."

"So he did," said Pecky; "he acshally took that tank for the sea, till mother told him it wasn't, silly cuckoo!" Dick hated to be called a cuckoo.

"You shut up, you little sneak!" roared he. "You didn't know any better yourself. *You're* a cuckoo!"

Now there was a dreadful fight. Chirpy took Birdie and kept her close by her; the little twin sisters were obliged to be quiet. It was of no use to try and calm the fierce anger of their three passionate young brothers.

By and by Dick, beside himself with rage,

pushed Pecky over the edge of the pipe, and he fell—fell—fell.

In a moment the strife was over.

Cocky was terrified, Chirpy and Birdie in sad woe.

"Oh! what will poor mama do?" said Birdie.

"What will papa say?" cried Chirpy. "He was so proud of Pecky; he said he was sure he could see a curly feather like his own coming in Pecky's fluff."

Poor Dick sat, the most wretched little Cain of a sparrow, waiting for his father and mother to return.

At last they came. Oh what a fearful sight met their eyes as they flew near home! They were so merry and happy, poor little parents!

each with some nice food, for a dear girl who lived near used never to forget to lay some nice-sized crumbs on the sill of her window; and they knew if they could not find food elsewhere they should find some there, for whether they came or not she put out the crumbs; so they went with a good heart, sure they should not have their journey for nothing.

They dropped the bread they had in their beaks, and flew to Pecky. He was quite dead; better for him, poor little thing, than to break his back or injure his head, so that his whole life would be spoiled.

Nothing could be done that day but to see to the funeral.

On the next Dick's father told him to prepare for a journey. He should take him over the house to an old nest in a pipe at the other side, where he should live by himself till he was able to fly.

So after breakfast he bade adieu to his home and set off with his father on their journey—to the other end of the world it seemed to him —to his lonely home.

His parents fed and educated him, and in this lonely life it is to be hoped he had time

to think, at least he could not quarrel, and hurt other birds.

As soon as he could fly, his father and mother gave a farewell feast, for the others were very near leaving the nest. Dick was allowed to visit his old home once more, and there the funny, fluffy, big-eyed little birds met, now nice little smart pert brown sparrows, all going out into the world.

"Ah!" said Cocky, "our youth is over never to return."

Dick groaned.

"Come, cheer up, Dick," said Chirpy, "don't fret, begin a new life and forget the past."

"No, my dears," said the mother, "do not forget the past—profit by it. Face the sad truth; your youth is gone. It might have been full of the sweetest memories, so that in your old age, when you all met, one of your greatest delights would be to dwell on all the little events of that happy time. It is so in some families, full of sweet, loving, tender memories. The father and mother obeyed and honoured, the children full of love for each other. Now you are going to begin new lives, say to yourselves every morning,—

"I am going to sow a crop of deeds to-day, that I shall one day reap as happy, or tormenting thoughts."

"Your mother is right, my children," said their papa. "It is sad when the best comfort we can give any one is to bid them,

Forget the past."

In the loveliest corner of a lovely garden, two beautiful butterflies met on a rose-bush.

"Why, Belle!" said Beauty, "is it really you?"

"It is indeed, dear; how charming you have grown!"

"How delightful this new life is, is it not? So glorious to escape from the grubby existence we led!"

Just then little brown Bee came buzzing by, creeping into every sweet flower.

"How sweet he smells, and what a busy, happy little chap he is!" said Belle.

"Not much to look at," said Beauty disdainfully.

"But what a useful fragrant life he leads!" said Belle. "I admire him exceedingly."

"You had better marry him," said Beauty.

"He would not have me," said Belle, "he is a confirmed old bachelor for one thing, but I should like him as a friend. I am not like you, always thinking every polite insect wants to marry me."

"Well, so they do of course; see how pretty, and graceful, and gay we are!" laughed Beauty.

"I should like to be of some use as well," said Belle gravely.

"Darling, if you are going to preach, you must excuse me. Ta ta, dearest."

And spreading her lovely wings she floated away.

Belle remained on her rose seriously meditating.

"Yes," she said to herself, "I am pretty and graceful, and if I try ever so I cannot make honey like brown Bee, or work about like that cross little black ant."

"Yes, she is cross," said a lovely beetle, who had just stepped on a rose close to Belle, and

overheard what she said; "she makes quite an idol of her rules. If any one of the colony disobeyed a rule, I have known the rest sting him to death.

"She seems such a bustling driving little thing, so irritable, and her old age is lonely and torpid; she has no cosy nest or tender friends, no sweet honey or rich music in her home.

"Now Bees are always busy, but do not bustle, and they make such a sweet contented sound as they gather their honey—and if they sting it is only in terror, not in spite.

"Then their great love and care of the queen, and affectionate care of her babies, so unselfish. But the ant shows no respect to her superiors. I saw one just now go bustling after another who had strayed beyond the limits of the colony, and drag her back in such a rude, rough way, and the poor meek mother was forced to submit."

"There is nothing graceful or tender about her, she does so love her own strong will, and everything must give way to it. She loves to live by rule, and she would bend every one else to it. Such strict rule is all very well in

schools and jails and such places, but it is out of place in a home," said Belle.

"Well, you see, she never has a home. She is but a little old maid, poor thing."

When Belle was left alone she began thinking again.

"Well," she said, "as I have been made so fair I will try and use my beauty well. I will not repine at not being clever and useful, I will see that my beauty and grace are pleasing to others, and not value them because they bring me admiration. Then if I cheer up others by my pretty looks and gay ways, I shall do the work I have been made fit for, and I will not envy the dear Bee, certainly not that fidgety little cross stern Anty—"

So dear Belle spread her beautiful wings and enjoyed every sunbeam, and sipped the diamond drops from the blades of grass, and flew into a sick-room, where a little boy's eyes grew bright to see her, and settled on the white head of an old man, and spoke to him of a wonderful change for him, when he too should soar aloft, free of all the cares and needs that chained him to earth. Then she flew out of the window and sat quite still on a lavender bush,

while a pale lady drew her with such interest. Dear, bright, amiable Belle, had she done no good when the day was over, think you?

Oh yes, yes, yes! very much good, by being simply lovely and graceful, and using her beauty and grace for others' good—not for her own vain joy.

THE KIND MONKEY.

LITTLE PIP was full of tricks, they were born in him, but as he had been beloved from a baby by his master he was very kind-hearted, and did much good with his odd little life. He had always had his sop in a cup, but he broke one or two, so his master bought him a tin pot. Oh, it put him in a rage.

No tin pot for him; out flew the sop, and on his head went the pot like a hat.

Once he turned on all the gas; such a smell! Once he turned it off as every one sat at tea.

Once an old man came to tea, who wore a wig, but he did not like any one to know it. He was sitting sipping his tea and enjoying his muffin, when Mr. Pip sprang on his shoulder and ran off with his wig. He climbed right up over the window, and there he sat with the wig on his own head.

The old man was very cross; but he was not a nice kind man, he was hard and harsh with the poor, so Pip's master used to say. Pip knew he was bad, and made up his mind to tease him.

Once Sir Hugh Lee called on his master and left his mare at the gate. Mr. Pip sprang on her back and made her go off. She was very wild, and feeling such a light weight on her back, but such tugs at her mouth, off she flew.

Sir Hugh had gone out into a wood at the

back to find Pip's master, so he did not know his mare was gone.

By and by he went to the gate and there was no mare.

"I expect Mr. Pip has a hand in this," said his master; "those were her steps we heard on the road then. We can do nothing, she is miles off by this time."

"I hope she will go to some house where I visit, and get a rest," said Sir Hugh, and he went home.

By and by, as he was going to dinner, the vicar called, and Sir Hugh heard his voice in the hall, so he went out himself to make him go in to dine.

"Sir Hugh, I am thankful to see you," said Dr. Grey. "I met your mare without any rider as I was on my way to dine with Mr. Vere, and I turned back at once to know whether you had been on her."

Poor Dr. Grey was quite pale, for he loved Sir Hugh, having taught him when a boy.

"Pip's work, my dear Doctor," said Sir Hugh.

"Bless me!" said Dr. Grey; "that accounts for it," and he sank thankfully into an easy-

chair. "I thought something was on her back, but I never thought of Pip, and I cannot see far in these glasses, but I feel sure he had a whip, and was using it too."

"Yes, I had unfortunately laid my whip on the post round which I fastened the reins, a thing I never did before—so Master Pip has it. Dear me! the mare will go like the wind; I never use the whip to her. They are at the sea-side by this time, I expect. Well, we can do no good, so come in and dine. Dr. Grey, you look quite worn out."

By and by came a man on horseback with a message to say the mare had arrived at the gate of Broome Hall, quite exhausted, and unfit to return till she had had a long rest. Lord Wilton was anxious to know if Sir Hugh was safe?"

No news of Pip.

By and by the man said to one of Sir Hugh's under-gardeners, "What a fine fellow your little boy grows! I saw him at his aunt's as I rode over here; and how fond his ape is of him!"

"His ape!" said Pat; "what ape?"

"He had a little ape with him; I only had a

minute to look at him as I rode through the gate."

But Pat ran off to Pip's master and soon found all out, and they sent over to his sister's for Pip.

It turned out that little Pat, who was the dearest little fellow, always ready to do some one a service, had run to open the gate, when he saw a horse rushing that way.

The moment Pip caught sight of little Pat he leapt off the horse, for he loved him. Little Pat was one of the few whom he would obey, and so he left the mare to go on as she liked. The poor tired creature was so glad to find herself near Broome Hall, for she knew she would have a feed, a rest, and a rub down. So the groom took her in, and just let her wash her mouth, for she was very hot, and then he gave her such a nice rub down. She was so grateful, and rubbed her pretty head on his shoulder whenever she could. Then she lay down in the beautiful stable, had a nice rest all night and next day, and then was sent home.

The next time Sir Hugh rode her, he said Mr. Pip has done some good; he has taken some of the wildness out of her, at any rate.

After this Pip settled down a little. He got a whipping for this little game.

Next summer his master took him to the sea-side, and he fell in with the band. His master spoilt him sadly, and indulged every whim. He had a little coat trimmed with gold lace, and a cap exactly like what the band wore made for Pip, and he joined the band.

It was a fine thing for them. Pip went round with a vase, and people gave him a great deal of money. Then he went back to his place and beat his drum so hard. No doubt he said to himself:

"If it were not for my drum, the band must stop."

No one could hear his little drum, but he did not know that. This is a very common kind of mistake, not peculiar to apes.

Before he left the sea-side he did a great deal of good. He saw a young man very tipsy; and he imitated him, so that every one roared with laughter. Next day this young man came on to the pier quite sober, and tidy, and smart. Pip began to tumble about, to let his hat fall back on his head, to totter in his gait, to catch the sides of the seats. Every one laughed.

MR. PIP RIDES SIR HUGH'S MARE. PAGE 116.

Poor Ned got so red, and after that nothing would tempt him to touch any more drink.

"No," said he. "You may jeer at me if you like. I can bear the jeer of a man, but the jeer of an ape is too much for me."

So old Sam, Ned's father, loved little Pip from that day.

Pip was also very kind to the sick, he would know at once if any one he loved was ill. He would put his little paw on theirs, and make a little cry, and pat his own eye.

Far better to be Pip than to be one of those who cannot feel for pain.

If an animal can feel for those whom it loves, how much more should a thinking, loving, human being be always ready to help and to soothe those who suffer? They have been able to learn the duty of sympathy, and to know who it is that puts gentle and kind thoughts for others into their hearts.

So dear little child, if you can but help to drive away a headache, you are serving God as much as a bishop when he is ministering in his cathedral—all that an apostle could do, for St. John, who was so full of love, could do no more than the best he knew; could only give

his ready help to any one who needed it, and his loving sympathy to all.

So if mama or nurse have a bad headache, remember to be quiet and kind.

And when dear papa comes home tired, creep up to him, very gently till you see whether he would like to talk to you, or whether you can fetch anything for him. Very often all his worry will go away, when his dear little ones soothe him, and are gentle and good.

You have a great work to do, dear child!

Now I have rather a sad tale to tell of a cousin of Creepy's,—a field-mouse. She lived mostly underground, and there she stored up immense heaps of food,—grain, nuts, seeds, fruit-stones, and so on.

This cousin of Creepy's was of a jealous disposition, and as she did not live very happily with her family she liked to sneer and say bitter things of those who were calm and prosperous. Oh, this is such an awful habit that I do hope no one but a poor little field-mouse who lived underground, out of sight of the sun and all lively things, ever was found to indulge it.

Poor thing! She made many of her companions unhappy, destroyed much joy, but she herself had no real peace.

She had a friend who also knew Creepy, and liked her in a weak sort of way, but who was very fond of gossip.

Well, one evening Mrs. Mus, as this field-mouse was called, had a visit from her friend Sylva, who had just brought in an old friend to pick a few grains of wheat with Mrs. Mus, and try the flavour of some lovely fruit-kernels she had been collecting from some rich golden plums that were being saved with great care for a fruit-show.

Mrs. Mus always made people welcome when she was in the humour for a bit of gossip—so she got out her kernels and her grain, and as Sylva was very fond of good eating, it put her in a frame of mind to enjoy a nice spiteful chat.

"Have you seen Mrs. Peepy lately?" asked Miss Sylva. "Really, dear, what a manager you are! come when I will—always prepared with something nice."

"I like my friends to enjoy themselves when they come to see *me*," said Mrs. Mus. "I may

not be so genteel as some mice we know—but give me comfort."

"I don't see that gentility gets one on in the end," said Sylva. "Poor Mrs. Peepy has lost all her children, robbed of her nest by that young fat creature that always reminds me of a harvest-mouse, she is so round and merry."

"Dear, dear!" said Mrs. Mus; "how was that?"

So Sylva told the story, and began to say, "how much nicer Creepy was, and what a happy family they were!"

Mrs. Mus was silent.

"You *do* consider your cousin very fortunate, don't you?" inquired Sylva.

"Maybe," said Mrs. Mus, pursing up her mouth, with a sort of mocking smile very slightly playing over her face.

"Well, I thought they really were the happiest couple!" said Miss Sylva.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Mus.

"What do you say, Mrs. Vole?" asked Sylva of the other lady, a plump, motherly mouse.

"Mrs. Creepy is a very nice person, as pleasant a mouse as one would wish to know," said Mrs. Vole.

"Poor little soul!" sighed Mrs. Mus. "Help yourselves, pray."

Mrs. Vole then asked Miss Sylva what plans she had made for the winter.

If Miss Sylva had been wise, she would have seen that good sensible Mrs. Vole wanted to turn the subject; but she was weak, and silly, and though not ill-natured did love gossip, and also liked to humour Mrs. Mus, who was stuffing them with good things, and who she knew loved to talk of other people's faults. So when she had just answered Mrs. Vole she began again to say:

"If I'd been asked in a court of mice, with Lord Rodent himself sitting as chief judge, who were the happiest, blessedest pair in all these three fields, my answer would have been, 'Mr. and Mrs. Creepy;' and if my Lord himself had said, 'Excuse me, Miss Sylva, I must correct you there,' I should have answered him: 'Excuse *me*, my Lord, I've known my cousin Creepy for many months.' Shouldn't you have said as much, Mrs. Mus?"

Mrs. Mus gave such a sniff it was impossible not to notice it.

Mrs. Vole looked confused, and began to

say: "Lord Rodent must be *out* of town, or *gone* to town, it was such a time since she'd seen him."

Miss Sylva was about at last to let Mrs. Vole change the subject, when Mrs. Mus, seeing the danger, broke in with:

"When husbands and wives get quarrelling, so that the wife knocks her husband down, I don't think they can be called a happy pair. That's only *my* opinion."

Sylva opened her eyes very round.

"Lor, Mrs. Mus! what do you mean to say?"

"Ask Mrs. Vole there, my dear, if you doubt me," said Mrs. Mus, pretending to be absorbed with the hard shell of a nut.

Sylva turned, speechless, with her eyes quite round still to Mrs. Vole.

"You don't mean to say, Mrs. Vole, that Creepy went and knocked her husband down."

Mrs. Vole looked uneasy.

"Oh, my dear, best not say anything about it; no doubt it was an accident."

Mrs. Mus put down her nut.

"Sylva, this is just what we saw: Mrs. Vole was not far behind me, and I was about the

length of three straws from them. I saw Mr. Creepy talking fast to his wife, then I heard her talking and asking him how he could think such a thing of her?"

"What thing?" said Sylva eagerly.

"Ah! that I didn't hear; the next thing I saw Mr. Creepy mocking her, he sat with his arms hanging before him, and turning up his nose."

"Well," said Mrs. Vole, "that wasn't like his wife, anyhow."

"Then I saw," continued Mrs. Mus, "Mrs. Creepy jump up suddenly and hit him such a box on the ear that he went down at once."

Still Sylva kept her eyes on Mrs. Vole, who could not contradict that she saw this scene.

After a little more talk about the shape of Mrs. Creepy's house, the way she spoiled her children, and so on, Mrs. Mus began to get fidgety, and so Sylva and Mrs. Vole bid her "good-night."

Mrs. Vole ran quickly home to her ten babies; but Sylva, having no wholesome home duties, went lamenting on her way, to tell this sad tale to Mrs. Maes, and ask her if she thought it could be true?

Mr. Maes was at home, he kept his house in order. He was a fat, elderly, passionate, little mouse, who made wife and children tremble before him.

"Do you mean to tell me, Miss Sylva, that

Mrs. Mus and Mrs. Vole can declare they saw Mrs. Creepy knock her husband down?"

"They say so," said Miss Sylva, almost weeping with fear of this fierce little mouse.

"Let me make no mistake; Mrs. Vole saw her do it, *with—her—own—eyes,* Miss Sylva?"

Miss Sylva was now so upset by the terrible manner of Mr. Maes and his severe questions, that she said "she could not quite remember—

her memory was very weak—she really was not quite sure whether Mrs. Vole said it *was* with her own eyes or any one else's she saw Mr. Creepy struck—all she was *sure* of, *was* Mrs. Vole's *saying* she saw his wife knock him down."

"Then, don't you see, ma'am, that is just the same thing as saying it *was* with her own eyes? Do you still mean to keep to your tale, Miss Sylva?"

Poor Miss Sylva tried not to give way. She tried to pluck up a little spirit.

"Keep to my tail, Mr. Maes! most surely I do. Pray, why should I give it up? Give up my tail! I never heard such an idea come out of any mouse's mouth before. I thought, sir, you were much too well bred to propose such a thing."

"Then, Mrs. Maes, as we have no right to doubt Miss Sylva when she sticks to her tale with such firmness, I forbid your asking Mrs. Creepy to this nest for Tuesday, and you will refuse all further acquaintance with her."

But now poor Miss Sylva was quite distracted.

"Give up Mrs. Creepy's acquaintance because

I keep to my tail, Mr. Maes! My goodness, sir, how can you be so unjust?"

"No wife who insults her husband enters *my* home," said Mr. Maes, quite puffed out with anger; "let Mrs. Maes try it, Miss Sylva, just let her try it;" and he glared at poor Miss Sylva.

"You must do as you please, of course, sir," said she, crying; "but it seems very hard that poor Mrs. Creepy is to be treated so just because I want to keep my own tail."

Mr. Maes saw now what she meant. He stared at her with scorn, and said, "Keep your tail! what do I want with it?"

Mrs. Maes then gently explained that Mr. M. meant "did Miss Sylva mean to stick to her *story*," and was far from wishing to deprive her of her tail.

So Miss Sylva, somewhat calmer, assured him "that all she knew was from Mrs. Mus and Mrs. Vole, but *that* tale, so far, she must stick to."

So pompous little Mr. Maes strictly forbade his meek wife to speak again to Mrs. Creepy, and all this mischief lay at the door of spiteful Mrs. Mus.

Silly Miss Sylva was not much better for

carrying such a story, and she went home to her lonely abode very low-spirited. "Ah," said she, "I wish I had held my tongue. It is dreadful to think words once said, never, never can be unsaid."

The little tyrant Mr. Maes was well punished.

He went away for a summer ramble, and while he was away his ten little sons were taken with a fever.

No mouse would come near them. Creepy never knew it till too late. Mrs. Maes did not dare to send for her, such fear was she in of her pompous little husband.

So she, worn out with nursing them, was taken ill, and when Maes came home expecting to find everything in apple-pie order, he found many of his children dying, and his wife in a sad state.

The last time he met Mrs. Creepy he had quite insulted her, staring at her and passing her. Though Mrs. Creepy was amiable, she knew when she was insulted, and took care the offender should know that an apology must be offered.

So now Mr. Maes found out how stupid he had been.

He could not now go and ask Mrs. Creepy to help him, and he was sure she was the only mouse who had nerve enough among their neighbours.

But by-and-by Mrs. Creepy heard of their trouble, and she came to them, dear kind little thing, and brought cold fresh diamond-dew in acorn-cups to poor, thirsty, fevered Mrs. Maes, and soon cured her. Then she quietly went home.

Mr. Maes was in hopes he should be able to get friends with the Creepys again. It was sneaky of him, but he did hate to humble himself. But Mr. Creepy was very firm, and said:

"See here, Maes; if you choose to offer a full frank apology to my wife, I will permit her to be as friendly as ever with your wife, for I am very sorry for poor Mrs. Maes, who must suffer for your foolery; but when one mouse has offered a direct insult to another, there is but one way

to make a thorough wholesome cure of the wound—a full confession and frank apology. Then there is hope of being good friends again, but if we heal up a foul sore without cleansing it first, it does but rankle and break out ten times worse than ever. Just a few sincere words are all I shall ask, but they *must* be said, old fellow."

Mr. Maes saw Mr. Creepy was not a mouse to be trifled with. "Such an easy-tempered little fellow as I always thought him, too!" he said to himself.

But it is quite true that gentle, amiable, benevolent people, whether men or mice, are generally the very firmest. For it is best for the person who is in the wrong to be made to see and own his fault. Open confession is a very cleansing process, and when once it is faced, it is found to leave a very sweet sensation behind it. You crush and bruise and destroy Pride, and at once, in the very spot where it flourished with its thorns and prickles, springs up a sweet, fragrant, modest flower—Humility. And this lovely plant bears the richest, sweetest fruit of any tree in the heart's garden.

So Mr. Maes made a hearty apology, and the two families were better friends than ever, and at a small party given by the Creepys when Mrs. Maes recovered, Creepy told them the true story of his having been knocked down by

his wife, which amused them, though *she* had not yet forgiven herself. Sylva was there, and Mrs. Vole, but not Mrs. Mus.

"No," said Creepy, "let us resolve to banish the pest of mischief-makers from our homes—the best thing we can do for them is to teach them a lesson. They are quite as bad as thieves

and murderers. In fact they are both. We have but to trace the misery, the ruined health, and wealth, and happiness of which they are the causes, and we shall find it is so. As for you, my dear," said he to Sylva, "we forgive you, for I am sure you were truly sorry to hear such evil of us, though you did wrong to spread it."

"Oh, I was wrong indeed, Mr. Creepy," said Sylva, "but my heart was so full."

"Then you should have come straight to us and told us the simple truth, and see how soon we could have set you to rights, and should have had to thank you for letting us know what absurd reports were abroad about us."

"Now, my dear friends," said Mr. Maes, rising, "let me call on you to charge your acorn-cups with this crystal dew, in which I pledge my dear friend Creepy, and let us all resolve never to repeat an evil report, never to believe one without direct appeal to the person who is slandered, and never to fear that humble confession of our faults will lower our mousy dignity. I own I have been a pompous little tyrant, and found it very hard to humble myself, but I thank my good friend there for insisting upon

it; I see he did so as much for my good as for the sake of his offended wife. I assure you all I am rewarded by feeling a far nobler creature than I did when puffed up with pride. In short, I feel ten times more of a mouse than ever I did before in my life."

So they all cheered for the Creepys and for Mr. Maes.

Mrs. Maes shed the happiest tears she had ever dropped since she was a bride.

The five little mice that had recovered said to each other when they had done cheering, "Isn't Papa *nice?*"

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